Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills

Fifth Edition

John Langan

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Chapter One:
Vocabulary in Context

Do you know the meaning of the word *ubiquitous*?

Look at the sentence below and see if the **context**—the words surrounding the unfamiliar word—helps you figure out the meaning of the word.

> Cell phones have become *ubiquitous*; you can see—and hear—them everywhere.

What does *ubiquitous* mean?

A. unaffordable **B.** complicated **C.** widespread

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

If the phones are "everywhere," they must be *widespread*.

The **context** helps you figure out that *ubiquitous* means "widespread."

Cell phones have become *ubiquitous*; you can see—and hear—them everywhere.

What does *ubiquitous* mean?

A. unaffordable **B.** complicated **C.** widespread

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Using context clues will help you by

— **saving you time** when reading

— **adding to your vocabulary**

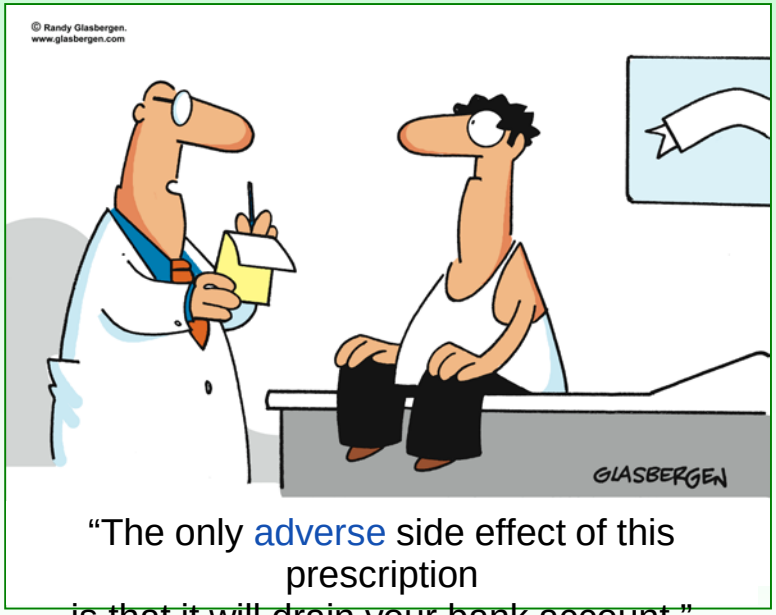
VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

There are four common types of context clues:

1. Examples
2. Synonyms
3. Antonyms
4. General Sense of the Sentence or Passage

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Examples

Look at the cartoon below. What do you think the word *adverse* means?


© Randy Glasbergen.
www.glasbergen.com
GLASBERGEN
"The only adverse side effect of this prescription
is that it will drain your bank account."

Adverse means

A. known.

B. pleasant.

C. harmful.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Examples

Look at the cartoon below. What do you think the word *adverse* means?

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"The only adverse side effect of this prescription is that it will drain your bank account."

Adverse means

A. known.

B. pleasant.

C. harmful.

The **example** of an adverse side effect — it will drain the patient's bank account — helps you understand that *adverse* means "harmful."

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Examples

Look at the sentences below and see if the examples help you understand the meaning of the word *tribulations*.

As they moved westward, early pioneers faced many *tribulations*, such as scarce food, extreme weather, and loneliness.

Tribulations means

A. criminals. **B.** hard decisions. **C.** great difficulties.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Examples

Look at the sentences below and see if the examples help you understand the meaning of the word *tribulations*.

As they moved westward, early pioneers faced many *tribulations*, such as scarce food, extreme weather, and loneliness.

Tribulations means

A. criminals. **B.** hard decisions. **C.** great difficulties.

The three **examples** of what the pioneers faced help you understand that *tribulations* means "great difficulties."

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Examples

Look at the sentences below and see if the examples help you understand the meaning of the word *idiosyncrasy*.

Each of my coworkers has a strange *idiosyncrasy*. For instance, our receptionist wears only pink. The mail clerk always speaks in a whisper. And my office mate lives on peanuts and apples.

Idiosyncrasy means

A. hidden thought. **B.** unusual goal. **C.** unusual personal trait.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Examples

Look at the sentences below and see if the examples help you understand the meaning of the word *idiosyncrasy*.

Each of my coworkers has a strange *idiosyncrasy*. For instance, our receptionist wears only pink. The mail clerk always speaks in a whisper. And my office mate lives on peanuts and apples.

Idiosyncrasy means

A. hidden thought. **B.** unusual goal. **C.** unusual personal trait.

The three **examples** of unusual personal habits help you understand that *idiosyncrasy* means "unusual personal trait."

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Examples

Examples are often introduced with **signal words and phrases** like *for example, for instance, including,* and *such as*.

Examples

As they moved westward, early pioneers faced many *tribulations*, **such as** scarce food, extreme weather, and loneliness.

Each of my coworkers has a strange *idiosyncrasy*. **For instance**, our receptionist wears only pink. The mail clerk always speaks in a whisper. And my office mate lives on peanuts and apples.

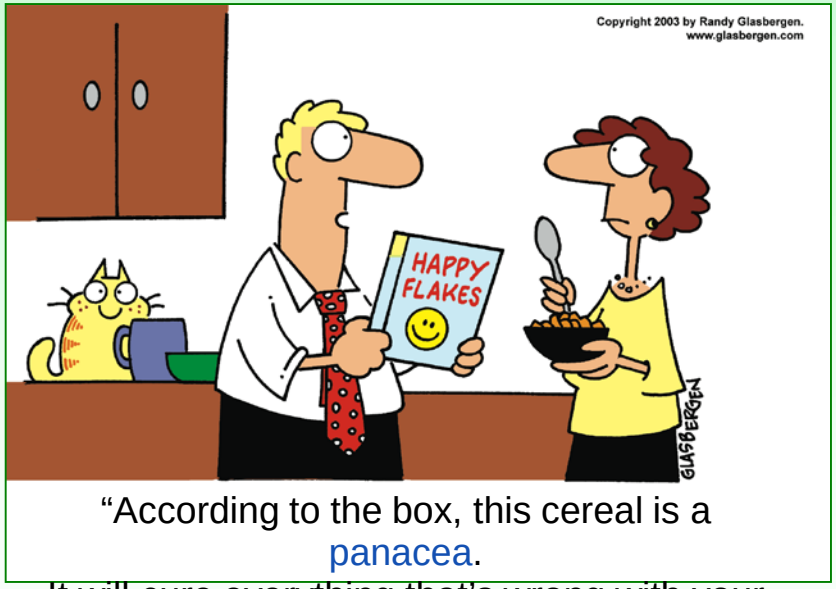
TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES

Synonyms

Context clues are often found in the form of **synonyms**: one or more words that mean the same or almost the same as the unknown word.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Synonyms

Look at the cartoon below. What words help you understand what *panacea* means?



"According to the box, this cereal is a panacea.
It will cure everything that's wrong with your life."

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Synonyms

Look at the cartoon below. What words help you understand what *panacea* means?

"According to the box, this cereal is a panacea.
It will cure everything that's wrong with your life."

The **synonym** that helps you understand the word *panacea* is "cure everything."

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES

Synonyms

In the sentences below, what is the **synonym** that tells you the meaning of the word *innate*?

That five-year-old girl must have *innate* musical talent; playing the piano so well at her age requires an inborn gift.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Synonyms

In the sentences below, what is the **synonym** that tells you the meaning of the word *innate*?

That five-year-old girl must have *innate* musical talent; playing the piano so well at her age requires an inborn gift.

The **synonym** *inborn* tells you the meaning of *innate.*

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES

Synonyms

In the sentences below, what is the **synonym** that tells you the meaning of the word *mentor*?

Gaining a *mentor* is helpful when you are beginning a new job. A wise and trusted advisor can greatly assist your career.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES

Synonyms

In the sentences below, what is the **synonym** that tells you the meaning of the word *mentor*?

Gaining a *mentor* is helpful when you are beginning a new job. A wise and trusted advisor can greatly assist your career.

The **synonym** *wise and trusted advisor* in the second sentence tells you the meaning of *mentor.*

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES

Antonyms

Antonyms are words or phrases that mean the opposite of a word.

Antonyms are also useful as context clues.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Antonyms

Look at the cartoon below. What words help you understand what *indolent* means?

"Indolent? I'm not being indolent! Trying to find something good to watch on TV while eating these chips is *really hard work*!"

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Antonyms

Look at the cartoon below. What words help you understand what *indolent* means?

"Indolent? I'm not being indolent! Trying to find something good to watch on TV while eating these chips is *really hard work*!"

The **antonym** *hard work* helps you figure out that the word *indolent* means "lazy."

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Antonyms

In the sentence below,

1. What is the **antonym** that helps you figure out the meaning of the word *verbose*?
2. What is the meaning of *verbose*?

A memo that is brief and to the point is more likely to be read than one that is *verbose* and rambling.

Verbose means

A. argumentative. **B.** wordy. **C.** short.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Antonyms

In the sentence below,

1. What is the **antonym** that helps you figure out the meaning of the word *verbose*?
2. What is the meaning of *verbose*?

> A memo that is brief and to the point is more likely to be read than one that is *verbose* and rambling.

Verbose means

A. argumentative. **B.** wordy. **C.** short.

Verbose is the **opposite** of "brief and to the point," so it must mean "wordy."

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Antonyms

In the sentence below,

1. What is the **antonym** that helps you figure out the meaning of the word *bizarre*?
2. What is the meaning of *bizarre*?

> Most of my friends' mothers seemed ordinary; mine, however, did such *bizarre* things as spraying green paint on a dead tree in front of our house.

Bizarre means

A. odd. **B.** easy. **C.** dangerous.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Antonyms

In the sentence below,

1. What is the **antonym** that helps you figure out the meaning of the word *bizarre*?
2. What is the meaning of *bizarre*?

> Most of my friends' mothers seemed ordinary; mine, however, did such *bizarre* things as spraying green paint on a dead tree in front of our house.

Bizarre means

A. odd. **B.** easy. **C.** dangerous.

Bizarre is the **opposite** of "ordinary," so it must mean "odd."

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
Antonyms

Antonyms are sometimes signaled by words such as *however, but, yet, on the other hand,* and *in contrast*.

Example

Most of my friends' mothers seemed ordinary; mine, **however**, did such *bizarre* things as spraying green paint on a dead tree in front of our house.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
General Sense of the Sentence or Passage

- Sometimes, to figure out an unfamiliar word, you must draw conclusions based on the information given.

- Asking yourself questions can help you make an accurate guess about the meaning of the unfamiliar word.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES

General Sense of the Sentence or Passage

Look at the cartoon below. To understand the meaning of *opportune*, ask yourself: Is this a good time for the boss to tell the injured worker that he's been fired?

"This may not be the opportune time to tell you this, Cranston, but you're fired."

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES

General Sense of the Sentence or Passage

Look at the cartoon below. To understand the meaning of *opportune*, ask yourself: Is this a good time for the boss to tell the injured worker that he's been fired?

"This may not be the opportune time to tell you this, Cranston, but you're fired."

Since the boss realizes that "this may not be the opportune time," his words to Cranston strongly suggest that *opportune* means "suitable."

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
General Sense of the Sentence or Passage

Read the sentence below. Then think about the question that follows to figure out the meaning of *rectified*.

One argument against capital punishment is that if an innocent person is executed, the mistake cannot be *rectified*.

(What cannot be done about a mistake as final as an execution?)

Rectified means

A. remembered. **B.** predicted. **C.** corrected.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
General Sense of the Sentence or Passage

Read the sentence below. Then think about the question that follows to figure out the meaning of *rectified*.

One argument against capital punishment is that if an innocent person is executed, the mistake cannot be *rectified*.

(What cannot be done about a mistake as final as an execution?)

Rectified means

A. remembered. **B.** predicted. **C.** corrected.

Because the innocent person is dead, there is no way to correct the mistake of having executed the person.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
General Sense of the Sentence or Passage

Read the sentence below. Then think about the question that follows to figure out the meaning of *extricate*.

> It took two days for volunteers to *extricate* the little girl from the bottom of the well.

(How would volunteers try to help the trapped girl?)

Extricate means

A. free. **B.** delay. **C.** remember.

TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES
General Sense of the Sentence or Passage

Read the sentence below. Then think about the question that follows to figure out the meaning of *extricate*.

> It took two days for volunteers to *extricate* the little girl from the bottom of the well.

(How would volunteers try to help the trapped girl?)

Extricate means

A. free. **B.** delay. **C.** remember.

If the girl is at the bottom of a well, the volunteers would try to free her.

TEXTBOOK DEFINITIONS

- Textbook authors often provide definitions of important terms, followed by examples.
- They usually set off the terms they are defining in *italic* or **boldface** type.

Example

In all societies there is some **vertical mobility**—moving up or down the status ladder. The upward movement is called *upward mobility* and the downward movement, *downward mobility*. The promotion of a teacher to the position of principal is an example of upward mobility, and demotion from principal to teacher is downward mobility.

CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned the following:

- To save time when reading, you should try to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words. You can do so by looking at their *context*—the words surrounding them.
- There are four kinds of context clues: **examples** (marked by words like *for example*, *for instance*, *including*, and *such as*); **synonyms** (words that mean the same as unknown words); **antonyms** (words that mean the opposite of unknown words); and **general sense of the sentence** (clues in the sentence or surrounding sentences about what words might mean).
- Textbook authors typically set off important words in *italic* or **boldface** and define those words for you, often providing examples as well.

The next chapter—Chapter 2—will introduce you to the most important of all comprehension skills: finding the main idea.

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Chapter Two:
Main Ideas

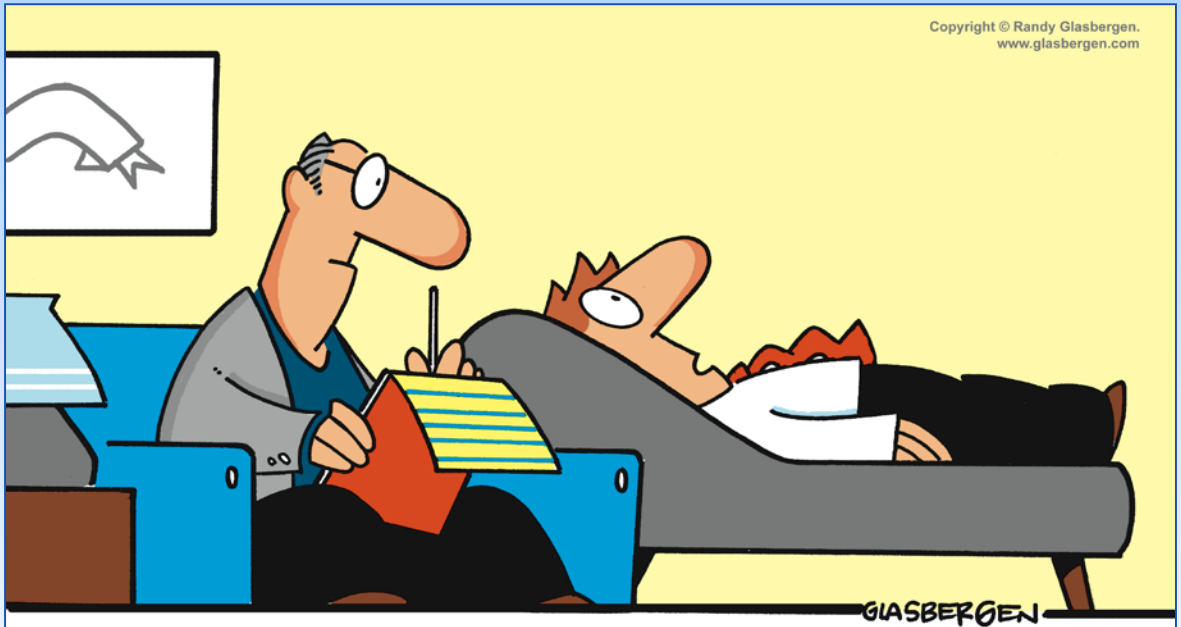
Recognizing the **main idea**, or point,
is the most important key
to good comprehension.

WHAT IS THE MAIN IDEA?

To find the main idea, or point, in a reading selection, ask yourself:

“What is the main point the author is trying to make?”

WHAT IS THE MAIN IDEA?



"I've got problems. I lost my job. My wife left me. My friends don't return my phone calls. Even my dog won't go for a walk with me."

The main idea, or point, in this cartoon—that the man on the couch has problems—is well supported by the statements about his job, wife, friends, and dog.

WHAT IS THE MAIN IDEA?

Read this paragraph, asking yourself, "What is the author's point?"

Many people feel that violence on television is harmless entertainment. However, we now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways. One study showed that frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others. They try to protect themselves from the outside world with extra locks on the doors, alarm systems, guard dogs, and guns. In addition, that same study showed that heavy TV watchers are less upset about real-life violence than non-TV watchers. It seems that the constant violence they see on TV makes them less sensitive to the real thing. Another study, of a group of children, found that TV violence increases aggressive behavior. Children who watched violent shows were more willing to hurt another child in games where they were given a choice between helping and hurting. They were also more likely to select toy weapons over other kinds of playthings.

Which general statement is supported by the other material in the passage?

A. Many people feel that violence on television is harmless entertainment.

B. However, we now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways.

C. One study showed that frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others.

D. They try to protect themselves from the outside world with extra locks on the doors, alarm systems, guard dogs, and guns.

WHAT IS THE MAIN IDEA?

Explanation

A — The paragraph does not support the idea that TV violence is harmless. Sentence A introduces the topic of TV violence.

B — This is a general statement. The rest of the passage goes on to describe three negative ways that TV violence affects people.

C — This sentence is about only one study. It is not general enough to include the other studies cited in the paragraph.

D — This sentence provides detailed evidence for the first supporting idea. It does not cover the rest of the paragraph.

Which general statement is supported by the other material in the passage?

A. Many people feel that violence on television is harmless entertainment.

B. However, we now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways.

C. One study showed that frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others.

D. They try to protect themselves from the outside world with extra locks on the doors, alarm systems, guard dogs, and guns.

WHAT IS THE MAIN IDEA?

The Main Idea as an "Umbrella" Idea

TV VIOLENCE
DOES AFFECT PEOPLE
IN NEGATIVE WAYS
Frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others.
Heavy TV watchers are less upset about real-life violence than non-TV watchers.
TV violence increases aggressive behavior in children.

- The main idea is the author's general point.
- The other material of the paragraph fits under the general point.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

- To recognize the main idea of a passage, you must **think as you read**.

- Here are three strategies that will help you find the main idea:

  1 Look for general versus specific ideas.

  2 Use the topic to lead you to the main idea.

  3 Use key words to lead you to the main idea.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

1 Look for General versus Specific Ideas

In the list of words below, which three items are **specific ideas,** and which item is the **general idea**?

A. dishonesty
B. greed
C. bad qualities
D. selfishness

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

1 Look for General versus Specific Ideas

Specific ⇨ **A.** dishonesty

Specific ⇨ **B.** greed

General ⇨ **C.** bad qualities

Specific ⇨ **D.** selfishness

Explanation

Bad qualities is the **general idea**. It includes three **specific** types of bad qualities: dishonesty, greed, and selfishness.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

1 Look for General versus Specific Ideas

Look again at the paragraph on TV violence. Notice that the *general idea* is supported by *specific ideas*.

Many people feel that violence on television is harmless entertainment. However, we now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways. [⇦ **general idea**] One study showed that frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others. [⇦ **specific idea**] They try to protect themselves from the outside world with extra locks on the doors, alarm systems, guard dogs, and guns. In addition, that same study showed that heavy TV watchers are less upset about real-life violence than non-TV watchers. [⇦ **specific idea**] It seems that the constant violence they see on TV makes them less sensitive to the real thing. Another study, of a group of children, found that TV violence increases aggressive behavior. [⇦ **specific idea**] Children who watched violent shows were more willing to hurt another child in games where they were given a choice between helping and hurting. They were also more likely to select toy weapons over other kinds of playthings.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

2 Use the Topic to Lead You to the Main Idea

- The **topic** is the general subject of a reading selection.
- Knowing the **topic** can help you find the writer's main point about that topic.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

2 Use the Topic to Lead You to the Main Idea

- To find the topic of a selection, ask yourself:

  Who or what is the selection **about**?

- After you find the topic, ask yourself:

  What **main point** is the author making about the topic?

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

2 Use the Topic to Lead You to the Main Idea

Recently a family of four were found dead in their suburban home in New Jersey—victims of carbon monoxide. Such cases are tragically common. Carbon monoxide is deadly for many reasons. To begin with, it is created in the most ordinary of ways—by the burning of wood, coal, or petroleum products. Once created, this gas is impossible to detect without instruments; it is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. Also, carbon monoxide mingles with and remains in the air rather than rising and being carried away by the wind. Then, when people unsuspectingly breathe it in, it chokes them, taking the place of the oxygen in their blood. Furthermore, it can do its lethal work in very small quantities: anyone exposed to air that is just 1 percent carbon monoxide for even a few minutes will almost certainly die.

What is the **topic** of the paragraph?

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

2 Use the Topic to Lead You to the Main Idea

Recently a family of four were found dead in their suburban home in New Jersey—victims of carbon monoxide. Such cases are tragically common. Carbon monoxide is deadly for many reasons. To begin with, it is created in the most ordinary of ways—by the burning of wood, coal, or petroleum products. Once created, this gas is impossible to detect without instruments; it is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. Also, carbon monoxide mingles with and remains in the air rather than rising and being carried away by the wind. Then, when people unsuspectingly breathe it in, it chokes them, taking the place of the oxygen in their blood. Furthermore, it can do its lethal work in very small quantities: anyone exposed to air that is just 1 percent carbon monoxide for even a few minutes will almost certainly die.

What is the **topic** of the paragraph?

Carbon monoxide

Explanation

Everything in the paragraph is about the topic of carbon monoxide. Notice how many times the term is used in the passage.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

2 Use the Topic to Lead You to the Main Idea

Recently a family of four were found dead in their suburban home in New Jersey—victims of carbon monoxide. Such cases are tragically common. Carbon monoxide is deadly for many reasons. To begin with, it is created in the most ordinary of ways—by the burning of wood, coal, or petroleum products. Once created, this gas is impossible to detect without instruments; it is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. Also, carbon monoxide mingles with and remains in the air rather than rising and being carried away by the wind. Then, when people unsuspectingly breathe it in, it chokes them, taking the place of the oxygen in their blood. Furthermore, it can do its lethal work in very small quantities: anyone exposed to air that is just 1 percent carbon monoxide for even a few minutes will almost certainly die.

What is the **main idea** of the paragraph?

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

2 Use the Topic to Lead You to the Main Idea

Recently a family of four were found dead in their suburban home in New Jersey—victims of carbon monoxide. Such cases are tragically common. Carbon monoxide is deadly for many reasons. To begin with, it is created in the most ordinary of ways—by the burning of wood, coal, or petroleum products. Once created, this gas is impossible to detect without instruments; it is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. Also, carbon monoxide mingles with and remains in the air rather than rising and being carried away by the wind. Then, when people unsuspectingly breathe it in, it chokes them, taking the place of the oxygen in their blood. Furthermore, it can do its lethal work in very small quantities: anyone exposed to air that is just 1 percent carbon monoxide for even a few minutes will almost certainly die.

What is the **main idea** of the paragraph?

Carbon monoxide is deadly for many reasons.

Explanation

The third sentence states a general idea that sums up what the entire paragraph is about. It is an “umbrella” statement under which all the other material in the paragraph fits.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

2 Use the Topic to Lead You to the Main Idea

Recently a family of four were found dead in their suburban home in New Jersey—victims of carbon monoxide. Such cases are tragically common. Carbon monoxide is deadly for many reasons. [⇦ **topic sentence**] To begin with, it is created in the most ordinary of ways—by the burning of wood, coal, or petroleum products. Once created, this gas is impossible to detect without instruments; it is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. Also, carbon monoxide mingles with and remains in the air rather than rising and being carried away by the wind. Then, when people unsuspectingly breathe it in, it chokes them, taking the place of the oxygen in their blood. Furthermore, it can do its lethal work in very small quantities: anyone exposed to air that is just 1 percent carbon monoxide for even a few minutes will almost certainly die.

The sentence that states the main idea is known as the **main idea sentence** or the **topic sentence**.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

3 Find and Use Key Words to Lead You to the Main Idea

- Sometimes an author announces the main idea by using **key words**.
- One group of key words is **list words**. List words tell you that a list of items will follow.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

3 Find and Use Key Words to Lead You to the Main Idea

The main idea in the paragraph about carbon monoxide was stated like this:

> Carbon monoxide is deadly for many reasons.

The expression *many reasons* suggests that the paragraph may be about specific reasons that carbon monoxide is deadly. The **list words** *many reasons* help you identify the main idea.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

3 Find and Use Key Words to Lead You to the Main Idea

Here are some common words that often announce a main idea:

List Words

several kinds (or ways) of	several causes of	some factors in
three advantages of	five steps	among the results
various reasons for	a number of effects	a series of

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

3 Find and Use Key Words to Lead You to the Main Idea

Here are some common words that often announce a main idea:

List Words

several kinds (or ways) of	several causes of	some factors in
three advantages of	five steps	among the results
various reasons for	a number of effects	a series of

Notice that each has a word that ends in **s**. The plural suggests that the supporting details will be a list of items.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

3 Find and Use Key Words to Lead You to the Main Idea

- Another type of key word is the **addition word**.
- It is generally used right before a supporting detail.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

3 Find and Use Key Words to Lead You to the Main Idea

Here are some common words that often introduce supporting details and help you discover the main idea:

Addition Words

one	to begin with	also	further
first (of all)	for one thing	in addition	furthermore
second(ly)	other	next	last (of all)
third(ly)	another	moreover	final(ly)

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

3 Find and Use Key Words to Lead You to the Main Idea

Reread the paragraph about TV violence. As you do, pick out the **addition words** that alert you to supporting details. Also note the **list words** that suggest the main idea.

Many people feel that violence on television is harmless entertainment. However, we now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways. One study showed that frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others. They try to protect themselves from the outside world with extra locks on the doors, alarm systems, guard dogs, and guns. In addition, that same study showed that heavy TV watchers are less upset about real-life violence than non-TV watchers. It seems that the constant violence they see on TV makes them less sensitive to the real thing. Another study, of a group of children, found that TV violence increases aggressive behavior. Children who watched violent shows were more willing to hurt another child in games where they were given a choice between helping and hurting. They were also more likely to select toy weapons over other kinds of playthings.

RECOGNIZING A MAIN IDEA

3 Find and Use Key Words to Lead You to the Main Idea

Each new supporting detail is introduced by an **addition word** or words. The **list words** *negative ways* suggest the supporting details will be a list of negative ways TV violence affects people.

Many people feel that violence on television is harmless entertainment. However, we now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways [⇦ **list words**]. [**addition word** ⇨] One study showed that frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others. They try to protect themselves from the outside world with extra locks on the doors, alarm systems, guard dogs, and guns. [**addition words** ⇨] In addition, that same study showed that heavy TV watchers are less upset about real-life violence than non-TV watchers. It seems that the constant violence they see on TV makes them less sensitive to the real thing. [**addition word** ⇨] Another study, of a group of children, found that TV violence increases aggressive behavior. Children who watched violent shows were more willing to hurt another child in games where they were given a choice between helping and hurting. They were also more likely to select toy weapons over other kinds of playthings.

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea at the Beginning

Main Idea
Supporting Detail
Supporting Detail
Supporting Detail
Supporting Detail

or

Introductory Detail
Main Idea
Supporting Detail
Supporting Detail
Supporting Detail

In textbooks, the main idea is often stated in the first or second sentence of the paragraph. The rest of the paragraph then supports the main idea with details.

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea at the Beginning

As you read the paragraph below, look for the **main idea**.

For shy people, simply attending class can be stressful. Several strategies, though, can lessen the trauma of attending class for shy people. Shy students should time their arrival to coincide with that of most other class members—about two minutes before the class is scheduled to begin. If they arrive too early, they may be seen sitting alone or, even worse, actually forced to talk with another early arrival. If they arrive late, all eyes will be upon them. Before heading to class, the shy student should dress in the least conspicuous manner possible—say, in the blue jeans, sweatshirt, and sneakers that 99.9 percent of their classmates wear. That way they won't stand out from everyone else. They should take a seat near the back of the room. But they shouldn't sit at the very back, since instructors sometimes make a point of calling on students there.

Which sentence contains the main idea?

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea at the Beginning

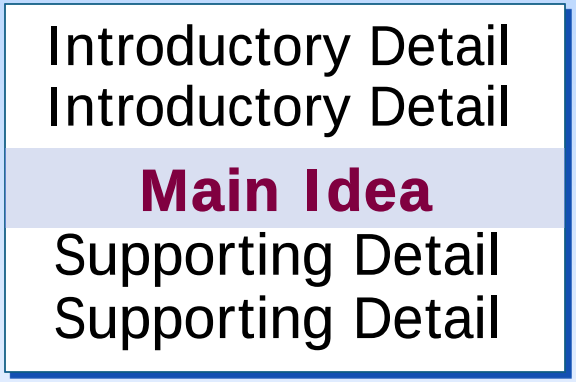
For shy people, simply attending class can be stressful. Several strategies, though, can lessen the trauma of attending class for shy people. Shy students should time their arrival to coincide with that of most other class members—about two minutes before the class is scheduled to begin. If they arrive too early, they may be seen sitting alone or, even worse, actually forced to talk with another early arrival. If they arrive late, all eyes will be upon them. Before heading to class, the shy student should dress in the least conspicuous manner possible—say, in the blue jeans, sweatshirt, and sneakers that 99.9 percent of their classmates wear. That way they won't stand out from everyone else. They should take a seat near the back of the room. But they shouldn't sit at the very back, since instructors sometimes make a point of calling on students there.

Explanation

The first sentence introduces the topic: shy people in class. The second sentence contains the main idea. The remaining sentences support the main idea with examples of pain causing aggression.

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea in the Middle



Sometimes the main idea appears in the middle of the paragraph.

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea in the Middle

As you read the paragraph below, look for the **main idea**.

A television ad for a new sports car showed scenes of beautiful open country that suggested freedom and adventure. The car never appeared in the ad at all. An ad for a hotel chain showed a romantic couple in bed together. They were obviously on vacation and having a leisurely, romantic, sexy morning. As these ads suggest, advertisers often try to sell products and services by associating them with positive images rather than by providing relevant details about the product or service. An ad giving the car's gas mileage, safety rating, or repair frequency would be more important to a buyer, but it might not draw the viewer's interest as much as beautiful scenery. Similarly, details on the hotel's prices and service would be more informative than images of a glamorous vacation. But the romantic couple gets people's attention and associates the hotel in the viewers' minds with a good time.

Which sentence contains the main idea?

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea in the Middle

A television ad for a new sports car showed scenes of beautiful open country that suggested freedom and adventure. The car never appeared in the ad at all. An ad for a hotel chain showed a romantic couple in bed together. They were obviously on vacation and having a leisurely, romantic, sexy morning. As these ads suggest, advertisers often try to sell products and services by associating them with positive images rather than by providing relevant details about the product or service. An ad giving the car's gas mileage, safety rating, or repair frequency would be more important to a buyer, but it might not draw the viewer's interest as much as beautiful scenery. Similarly, details on the hotel's prices and service would be more informative than images of a glamorous vacation. But the romantic couple gets people's attention and associates the hotel in the viewers' minds with a good time.

The first four sentences introduce the topic of advertisers and provide specific examples of the main idea. The fifth sentence contains the main idea. The rest of the paragraph further develops the main idea.

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea at the End

Sometimes all of the sentences in the paragraph will lead up to the main idea, which is presented at the end.

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea at the End

As you read the paragraph below, look for the **main idea**.

Only about 1 percent of insect species are destructive to crops and property. Nevertheless, this small group causes several billion dollars of damage each year in the United States alone. Harmful insects include household pests, such as termites; crop and livestock pests, such as boll weevils; and hosts of disease-causing organisms, such as mosquitoes infected with parasitic protozoa. Many insects, on the other hand, are beneficial to human society. Some insects pollinate fruit trees, flowers, and many field crops. Bees produce honey and beeswax, silkworms form cocoons from which silk is spun, and lac insects provide the raw material for commercial shellac. Some kinds of insects are natural enemies of destructive insects. For example, the larvae of certain wasps feed on caterpillars that destroy plants. Clearly, insects are both harmful and beneficial to human society.

Which sentence contains the main idea?

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea at the End

Only about 1 percent of insect species are destructive to crops and property. Nevertheless, this small group causes several billion dollars of damage each year in the United States alone. Harmful insects include household pests, such as termites; crop and livestock pests, such as boll weevils; and hosts of disease-causing organisms, such as mosquitoes infected with parasitic protozoa. Many insects, on the other hand, are beneficial to human society. Some insects pollinate fruit trees, flowers, and many field crops. Bees produce honey and beeswax, silkworms form cocoons from which silk is spun, and lac insects provide the raw material for commercial shellac. Some kinds of insects are natural enemies of destructive insects. For example, the larvae of certain wasps feed on caterpillars that destroy plants. Clearly, insects are both harmful and beneficial to human society.

The first three sentences provide details about destructive insects. The next five sentences provide details about beneficial insects. The last sentence states the main idea, that insects are both harmful and beneficial.

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea at the Beginning and the End

Main Idea
Supporting Detail
Supporting Detail
Supporting Detail
Main Idea

Sometimes an author will state the main idea near the beginning of the paragraph and then emphasize it by restating it later in the paragraph.

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea at the Beginning and the End

Read the paragraph and look for the **two main idea sentences**.

An important result of medical advances is an increase in the number of conditions thought to be of medical concern. In the not-to-distant past, birth and death usually occurred at home. Family members and friends were there or close by. Now most people are born and die in a hospital, surrounded by bright lights and expensive machines. People who were addicted to alcohol or drugs were once considered sinful or lacking in willpower. Now they are considered "sick." Problems that used to be accepted as part of life—baldness, wrinkles, small breasts, sleeplessness—are now deemed proper matters for medical attention. Some criminologists have even defined antisocial behavior as a medical problem. Lawbreakers of all kinds, from the shoplifter to the mass murderer, may potentially be labeled "sick." Because of current medical knowledge, what were once thought to be problems of life or of character are now considered medical issues.

Which two sentences contain the main idea?

LOCATIONS OF THE MAIN IDEA

Main Idea at the Beginning and the End

An important result of medical advances is an increase in the number of conditions thought to be of medical concern. In the not-to-distant past, birth and death usually occurred at home. Family members and friends were there or close by. Now most people are born and die in a hospital, surrounded by bright lights and expensive machines. People who were addicted to alcohol or drugs were once considered sinful or lacking in willpower. Now they are considered "sick." Problems that used to be accepted as part of life—baldness, wrinkles, small breasts, sleeplessness—are now deemed proper matters for medical attention. Some criminologists have even defined antisocial behavior as a medical problem. Lawbreakers of all kinds, from the shoplifter to the mass murderer, may potentially be labeled "sick." Because of current medical knowledge, what were once thought to be problems of life or of character are now considered medical issues.

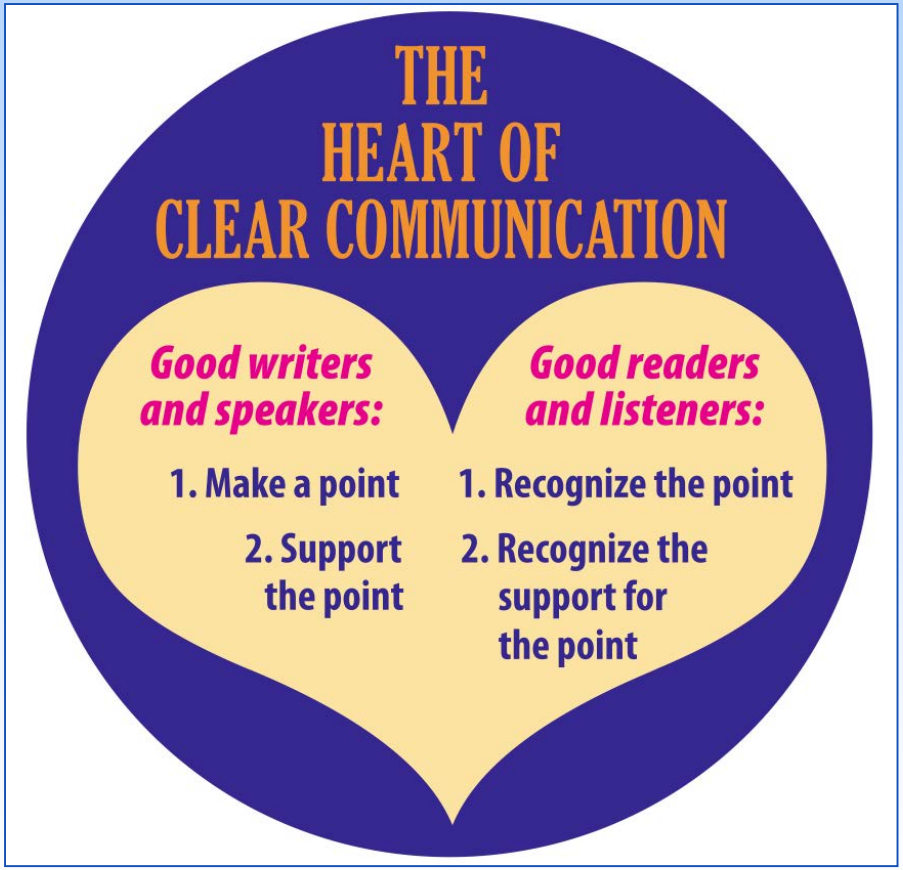
The main idea—because of medical advances, more problems are considered medical issues—is expressed in different words in the first and last sentences.

MAIN IDEAS

The Central Point

- Just as a paragraph may have a main idea, a longer selection may have a **central point**.
- The central point in a longer selection is also known as a **central idea** or **thesis**.
- You can find a central point in the same way you find a main idea—by identifying the topic and then looking for the supporting material.

MAIN IDEAS
A Final Thought



Whether we are readers, writers, listeners, or speakers, the "heart" of clear communication is the main idea, or point, and the support for the main idea.

CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned the following:

- Recognizing the main idea is the most important key to good comprehension. The main idea is a general "umbrella" idea under which fits all the specific supporting material of the passage.
- Three strategies that will help you find the main idea are to 1) look for general versus specific ideas; 2) use the topic (the general subject of a selection) to lead you to the main idea; 3) use key words—verbal clues that lead you to the main idea.
- The main idea often appears at the beginning of a paragraph, though it may appear elsewhere in the paragraph.

The next chapter—Chapter 3—will sharpen your understanding of the specific details that authors use to support and develop their main ideas.

Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills

Fifth Edition

John Langan

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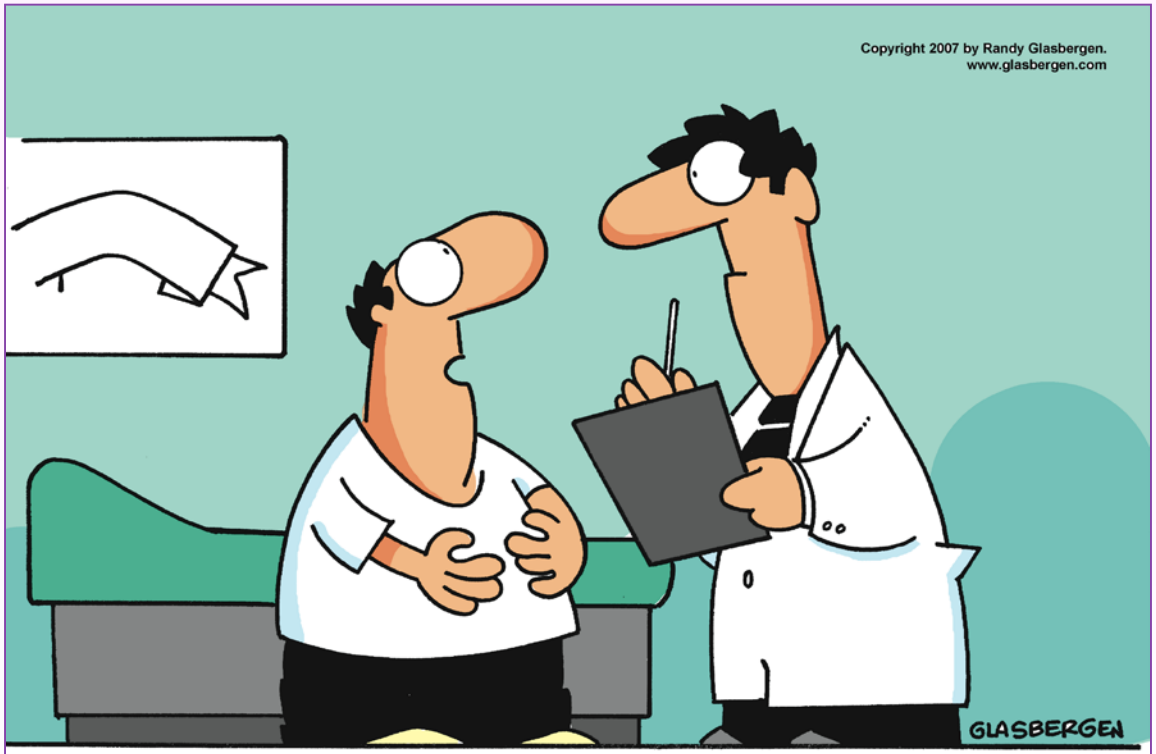
Chapter Three: Supporting Details

Supporting details are reasons, examples, facts, steps, or other kinds of evidence that explain a main idea.

WHAT ARE SUPPORTING DETAILS?



"I know why I don't lose weight. Eating big meals and lots of snacks makes me happy. Drinking beer makes me happy. Not exercising makes me happy."

In this cartoon, the main idea is: "I know why I don't lose weight.
The supporting details are: big meals, snacks, beer, and not exercising.
The joke is that these supporting details may make him *happy*, but they don't make him *healthy*.

WHAT ARE SUPPORTING DETAILS?

"A penny saved is a penny earned," the old saying goes. But there are now good reasons for our government to phase the penny out of our economy, allowing the nickel to stand as the lowest-valued coin. For one thing, pennies take up more space than they are worth. We can all recall the time when we needed a nickel, dime, or quarter to make an important phone call, buy a vending machine snack, or make a photocopy, and all we could come up with was a fistful of useless pennies. Pennies are also a nuisance to the business community. According to the National Association of Convenience Stores, 5.5 million hours and 22 million dollars are wasted by businesses on the extra time and effort it takes to handle pennies. Finally, keeping pennies in circulation costs the nation as a whole. The manufacturing, storage, and handling expenses involved in a penny's production and distribution add up to considerably more than the one cent it is worth.

What are the three major details that should be added to complete the basic outline of the paragraph?

Main idea: Our government should phase the penny out of the economy.

Supporting detail: 1.

Supporting detail: 2.

Supporting detail: 3.

WHAT ARE SUPPORTING DETAILS?

"A penny saved is a penny earned," the old saying goes. But there are now good reasons for our government to phase the penny out of our economy, allowing the nickel to stand as the lowest-valued coin. **[⇦main idea]** For one thing, pennies take up more space than they are worth. **[⇦supporting detail]** We can all recall the time when we needed a nickel, dime, or quarter to make an important phone call, buy a vending machine snack, or make a photocopy, and all we could come up with was a fistful of useless pennies. Pennies are also a nuisance to the business community. **[⇦supporting detail]** According to the National Association of Convenience Stores, 5.5 million hours and 22 million dollars are wasted by businesses on the extra time and effort it takes to handle pennies. Finally, keeping pennies in circulation costs the nation as a whole. **[⇦supporting detail]** The manufacturing, storage, and handling expenses involved in a penny's production and distribution add up to considerably more than the one cent it is worth.

Explanation

The three reasons given help you fully understand the main idea.

Main idea: Our government should phase the penny out of the economy.

Supporting detail: 1. Pennies take up more space than they are worth.

Supporting detail: 2. Pennies are a nuisance to the business community.

Supporting detail: 3. Pennies cost the nation as a whole.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Outlining

Outlines begin with the main idea, followed by supporting details.

- **Major details** explain and develop the main idea.
- **Minor details** help fill out the major details and make them clear.

Outlining is a useful note-taking strategy.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Outlining

Many people feel that violence on television is harmless entertainment. However, we now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways. One study showed that frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others. They try to protect themselves from the outside world with extra locks on the doors, alarm systems, guard dogs, and guns. In addition, that same study showed that heavy TV watchers are less upset about real-life violence than non-TV watchers. It seems that the constant violence they see on TV makes them less sensitive to the real thing.

Above is part of the paragraph from Chapter 2 on TV violence.

Reread it and pick out the **two major supporting details**.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Outlining

What information is needed to complete the outline of this passage?

Many people feel that violence on television is harmless entertainment. However, we now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways. [⇦ **main idea**] One study showed that frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others. [⇦ **major supporting detail**] They try to protect themselves from the outside world with extra locks on the doors, alarm systems, guard dogs, and guns. In addition, that same study showed that heavy TV watchers are less upset about real-life violence than non-TV watchers. [⇦ **major supporting detail**] It seems that the constant violence they see on TV makes them less sensitive to the real thing.

Main idea: We now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways.

Major detail: 1.

Minor details: Protect themselves with extra locks, alarms, dogs, and guns.

Major detail: 2.

Minor details: Constant TV violence makes them less sensitive to the real thing.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Outlining

Many people feel that violence on television is harmless entertainment. However, we now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways. [⇦ **main idea**] One study showed that frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others. [⇦ **major supporting detail**] They try to protect themselves from the outside world with extra locks on the doors, alarm systems, guard dogs, and guns. In addition, that same study showed that heavy TV watchers are less upset about real-life violence than non-TV watchers. [⇦ **major supporting detail**] It seems that the constant violence they see on TV makes them less sensitive to the real thing.

Main idea: We now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways.

Major detail: 1. Frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others.

Minor details: Protect themselves with extra locks, alarms, dogs, and guns.

Major detail: 2. Heavy TV watchers are less upset about real-life violence than non-TV watchers.

Minor details: Constant TV violence makes them less sensitive to the real thing.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Outlining

Outlining Tips

Tip 1 Look for words that tell you a list of details is coming.

List Words

several kinds of	various causes	a few reasons
a number of	a series of	three factors
four steps	among the results	several advantages

Examples

- But there are now good reasons for our government to phase the penny out of the economy.
- In fact, we now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Outlining
Outlining Tips

Tip 2 Look for words that signal major details. Such words are called **addition words**.

Addition Words

one	to begin with	also	further
first (of all)	for one thing	in addition	furthermore
second(ly)	other	next	last (of all)
third(ly)	another	moreover	final(ly)

Examples

Many people feel that violence on television is harmless entertainment. However, we now know that TV violence does affect people in negative ways [⇦**list words**]. [**addition word⇨**] **One** study showed that frequent TV watchers are more fearful and suspicious of others. They try to protect themselves from the outside world with extra locks on the doors, alarm systems, guard dogs, and guns. [**addition words ⇨**] **In addition**, that same study showed that heavy TV watchers are less upset about real-life violence than non-TV watchers. It seems that the constant violence they see on TV makes them less sensitive to the real thing.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Outlining

Outlining Tips

Tip 3 In your outline, put all supporting details of equal importance at the same distance from the margin.

Example

Main idea

1. Major detail

a. Minor detail

b. Minor detail

2. Major detail

a. Minor detail

b. Minor detail

c. Minor detail

3. Major detail

a. Minor detail

b. Minor detail

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Mapping

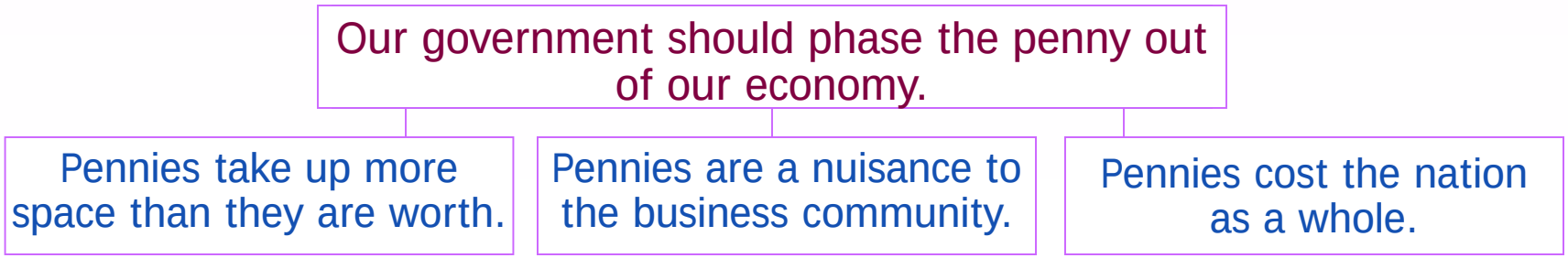
Maps, or diagrams, are visual outlines in which circles, boxes, or other shapes show the relationship between main ideas and supporting details.

Mapping, like outlining, is a useful note-taking strategy.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Mapping

Below is a map of the paragraph on phasing out the penny.

"A penny saved is a penny earned," the old saying goes. But there are now good reasons for our government to phase the penny out of our economy, allowing the nickel to stand as the lowest-valued coin. **[⇦main idea]** For one thing, pennies take up more space than they are worth. **[⇦supporting detail]** We can all recall the time when we needed a nickel, dime, or quarter to make an important phone call, buy a vending machine snack, or make a photocopy, and all we could come up with was a fistful of useless pennies. Pennies are also a nuisance to the business community. **[⇦supporting detail]** According to the National Association of Convenience Stores, 5.5 million hours and 22 million dollars are wasted by businesses on the extra time and effort it takes to handle pennies. Finally, keeping pennies in circulation costs the nation as a whole. **[⇦supporting detail]** The manufacturing, storage, and handling expenses involved in a penny's production and distribution add up to considerably more than the one cent it is worth.


Our government should phase the penny out of our economy.
Pennies take up more space than they are worth.
Pennies are a nuisance to the business community.
Pennies cost the nation as a whole.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Mapping

Read the following paragraph. Notice the list words and the addition words that signal the three major details.

Weber says that there are three types of authority from which governments gain their right to command. One type of authority is based on tradition. Kings, queens, feudal lords, and tribal chiefs do not need written rules in order to govern. Their authority is based on long-standing customs and is handed down through generations from parent to child. People may also submit to authority because of charisma, the exceptional personal quality of an individual. Such leaders as Napoleon and Gandhi illustrate authority that derives its legitimacy from charismatic personalities. The political systems of industrial states are based largely on a third type of authority: legal authority. These systems derive legitimacy from a set of explicit rules and procedures that spell out the ruler's rights and duties. Typically, the rules and procedures are put in writing. The people grant their obedience to "the law." It specifies procedures by which certain individuals hold offices of power, such as governor or president or prime minister. But the authority is vested in those offices, not in the individuals who temporarily hold the offices.

1. What words in the first sentence tell you that a **list of details** is coming?
2. What word signals the **first** major detail?
3. What word signals the **second** major detail?
4. What word signals the **third** major detail?

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Mapping

Read the following paragraph. Notice the list words and the addition words that signal the three major details.

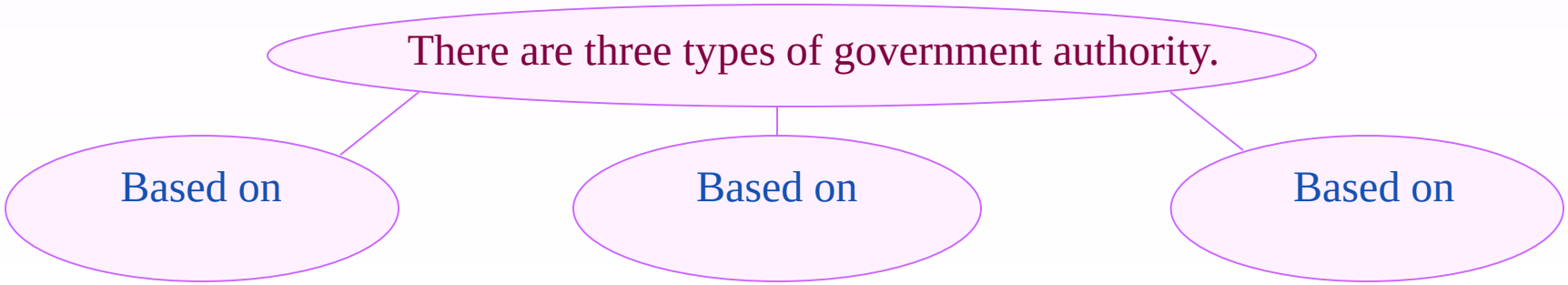
Weber says that there are **three types** of authority from which governments gain their right to command. **One** type of authority is based on tradition. Kings, queens, feudal lords, and tribal chiefs do not need written rules in order to govern. Their authority is based on long-standing customs and is handed down through generations from parent to child. People may **also** submit to authority because of charisma, the exceptional personal quality of an individual. Such leaders as Napoleon and Gandhi illustrate authority that derives its legitimacy from charismatic personalities. The political systems of industrial states are based largely on a **third** type of authority: legal authority. These systems derive legitimacy from a set of explicit rules and procedures that spell out the ruler's rights and duties. Typically, the rules and procedures are put in writing. The people grant their obedience to "the law." It specifies procedures by which certain individuals hold offices of power, such as governor or president or prime minister. But the authority is vested in those offices, not in the individuals who temporarily hold the offices.

1. What words in the first sentence tell you that a **list of details** is coming? *three types*
2. What word signals the **first** major detail? *One*
3. What word signals the **second** major detail? *also*
4. What word signals the **third** major detail? *third*

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Mapping

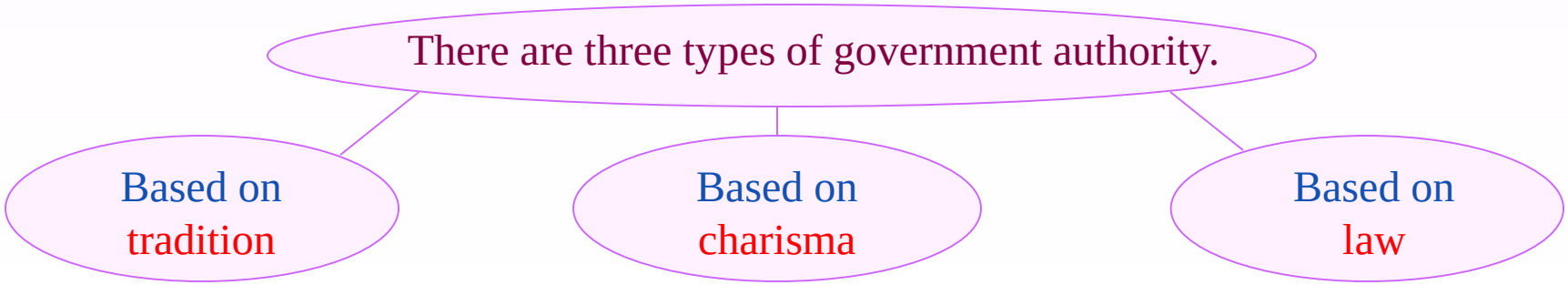
What major detail should be added to the map below?

Weber says that there are **three types** of authority from which governments gain their right to command. **One** type of authority is based on tradition. Kings, queens, feudal lords, and tribal chiefs do not need written rules in order to govern. Their authority is based on long-standing customs and is handed down through generations from parent to child. People may **also** submit to authority because of charisma, the exceptional personal quality of an individual. Such leaders as Napoleon and Gandhi illustrate authority that derives its legitimacy from charismatic personalities. The political systems of industrial states are based largely on a **third** type of authority: legal authority. These systems derive legitimacy from a set of explicit rules and procedures that spell out the ruler's rights and duties. Typically, the rules and procedures are put in writing. The people grant their obedience to "the law." It specifies procedures by which certain individuals hold offices of power, such as governor or president or prime minister. But the authority is vested in those offices, not in the individuals who temporarily hold the offices.



SUPPORTING DETAILS: Mapping

Weber says that there are **three types** of authority from which governments gain their right to command. **One** type of authority is based on tradition. Kings, queens, feudal lords, and tribal chiefs do not need written rules in order to govern. Their authority is based on long-standing customs and is handed down through generations from parent to child. People may **also** submit to authority because of charisma, the exceptional personal quality of an individual. Such leaders as Napoleon and Gandhi illustrate authority that derives its legitimacy from charismatic personalities. The political systems of industrial states are based largely on a **third** type of authority: legal authority. These systems derive legitimacy from a set of explicit rules and procedures that spell out the ruler's rights and duties. Typically, the rules and procedures are put in writing. The people grant their obedience to "the law." It specifies procedures by which certain individuals hold offices of power, such as governor or president or prime minister. But the authority is vested in those offices, not in the individuals who temporarily hold the offices.



SUPPORTING DETAILS: Summarizing

A **summary** is the reduction of a large amount of information to its most important points.

Like outlining and mapping, summarizing is a useful note-taking strategy.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Summarizing

Read the textbook passage below. Then read the summary that follows it.

People under severe stress may react to their problems with **regression**, a return to childlike behavior and defenses. Adults who cry when their arguments fail may expect those around them to react sympathetically, as their parents did when they were children. Other adults may use temper tantrums in a similar way. In both examples, people are drawing on childish behaviors to solve current problems, in the hope that someone will respond to them the way adults did when they were children. Inappropriate as it may seem, such immature and manipulative behavior often works—at least for a while.

Summary

Regression—a return to childlike behavior and defenses to solve current problems. For example, an adult whose argument fails may cry to get sympathy.

- Notice that the definition is *not* summarized, but the supporting information *is* summarized.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Summarizing

Read this textbook passage. Then answer the question that follows it.

The tendency for members to be so intent on maintaining group agreement that they overlook or put aside the flaws in their decision is called **groupthink**. Once a tentative decision has been made, members withhold information or opinions that might cast doubt on that course of action. They do not want to be seen as criticizing their colleagues or as "rocking the boat." If outside experts raise questions about the wisdom of their decision, members unite in opposing and discrediting the new information. The classic example of "groupthink" occurred during President Kennedy's administration. Kennedy sought the advice of a small group of trusted advisers in deciding whether to support the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. Although several advisers had strong objections to the plan, not one expressed doubts. As far as Kennedy knew, his advisers were unanimously in favor. The invasion was a military and public relations disaster.

Which example below best completes the study notes?

Groupthink—the tendency for members to be so intent on maintaining group agreement that they overlook or put aside the flaws in their decision.
Example—

A. During Kennedy's administration, the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 was a military and public relations disaster.

B. The classic example occurred during President Kennedy's administration.

C. Kennedy went ahead with the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion because advisors withheld their objections.

SUPPORTING DETAILS: Summarizing

A key point in the definition is that the group members overlook or put aside flaws in a decision.

Answer A tells about the results of the Bay of Pigs invasion, but says nothing about the advisors withholding their true opinions.

Answer B also does not mention the key point of the definition.

Answer C does include the idea that the advisors withheld their objections in order to seem unanimously in favor of the invasion.

Groupthink—the tendency for members to be so intent on maintaining group agreement that they overlook or put aside the flaws in their decision.

Example—

A. During Kennedy's administration, the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 was a military and public relations disaster.

B. The classic example occurred during President Kennedy's administration.

C. Kennedy went ahead with the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion because advisors withheld their objections.

CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned the following:

- Major and minor details provide the added information you need to make sense of a main idea.
- List words and addition words can help you to find major and minor supporting details.
- Outlining, mapping, and summarizing are useful note-taking strategies.
- Outlines show the relationship between the main idea, major details, and minor details of a passage.
- Maps are very visual outlines.
- Writing a definition and summarizing an example is a good way to take notes on a new term.

The next chapter—Chapter 4—will show you how to find implied main ideas and central points.

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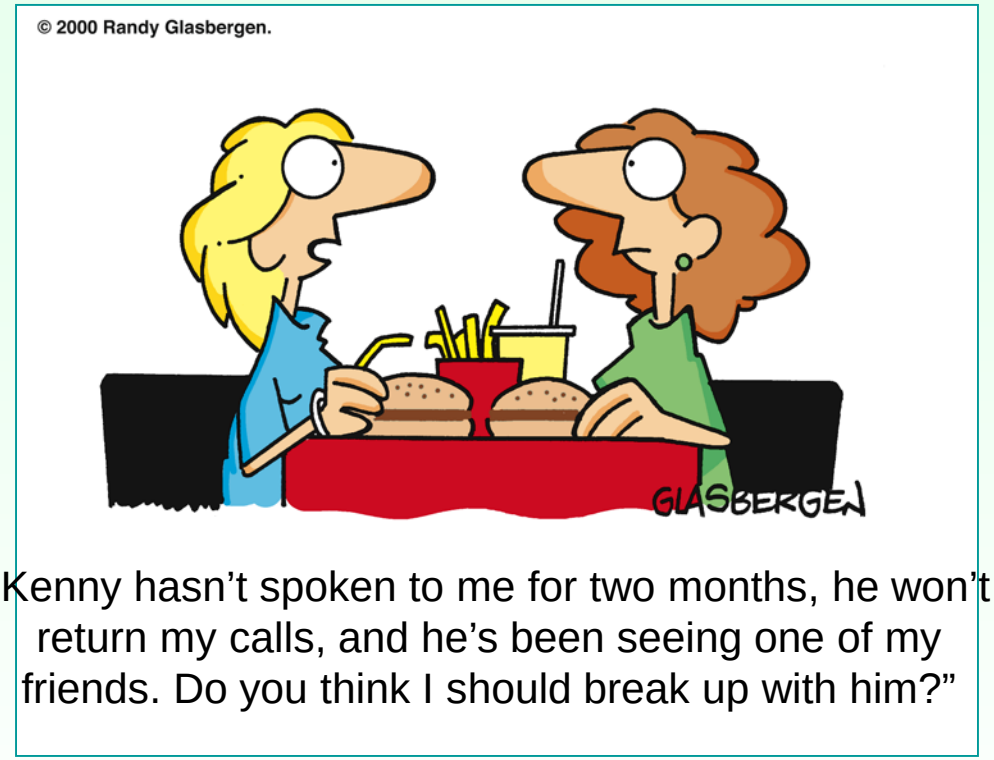
Chapter Four:
Implied Main Ideas

- An **implied main idea** is only suggested; it is not clearly stated in one sentence.
- To figure out an implied main idea, we must look at the supporting details.

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS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GLASBERGEN
"Kenny hasn't spoken to me for two months, he won't return my calls, and he's been seeing one of my friends. Do you think I should break up with him?"

In this cartoon, you can figure out the main idea by noting the details: the speaker's boyfriend hasn't spoken to her in two months, won't return her calls, and is dating one of her friends. The clearly implied idea is that *he* has already broken up with *her*.

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

To find the main idea when it is not directly stated, we must ask the same questions we've already used to find main ideas:

- Who or what is the paragraph about? (What is the **topic**?)
- What is the **main point** the author is trying to make about the topic?

When we think we know the main point, we can test it by asking this question:

- Does *all or most* of the material in the paragraph support this idea?

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

Read the paragraph below. Then answer the question.

Slashing their swords wildly, swordfish swim through schools of fish, trying to slice as many as possible; then they feast. When hooked by fishermen, they have been known to fight nonstop for three or four hours. They have pulled some fishermen to their deaths, and if they are not clubbed senseless when captured, they will slash fishermen on deck. A puncture wound by a swordfish bill means a severe and nearly instantaneous infection. Their sword, which is a bony extension of the upper jaw, is deadly sharp on the sides and can grow to a length of four or five feet. It is a weapon backed up by five hundred pounds of sleek, muscular fish. Swordfish have even been known to attack boats, driving their swords right through the hull and at times sinking them.

The topic of the paragraph is “swordfish.” Choose the point the author is trying to make about swordfish.

A. Swordfish will attack entire schools of fish.

B. Swordfish will fight for hours when hooked and have even pulled some fishermen to their deaths.

C. A swordfish bill can cause severe infections and even sink a boat.

D. Swordfish are aggressive, dangerous fish.

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

D is the correct answer.

- All of the details in the paragraph support the point that swordfish are aggressive, dangerous fish.
- Choices A, B, and C are all supporting details for this main idea.

A. Swordfish will attack entire schools of fish.

B. Swordfish will fight for hours when hooked and have even pulled some fishermen to their deaths.

C. A swordfish bill can cause severe infections and even sink a boat.

D. Swordfish are aggressive, dangerous fish.

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

Read the paragraph below. Then answer the question.

All writers get bogged down now and then. Accept the fact that sooner or later writer's block will happen to you. When it does, one response is to try to write something—no matter how awkward or imprecise it may seem. Just jot a reminder to yourself in the margin ("Fix this," "Redo," or "Ugh!") to fine-tune the section later. Another way to deal with a writing snag is leave a blank space—a spot for the right words when they finally come to mind at a later time. Then move on to an easier section, see if you can write that, and then return to the challenging part. It may also help to reread to yourself or out loud what you've already written. Regaining a sense of the large context may be enough to overcome writer's block. You might also try talking your way through a troublesome section. Like most people, you probably speak more easily than you write; by speaking aloud, you tap this oral fluency and put it to work in your writing.

What is the topic of the paragraph?

A. Writer's block
B. Writing and talking
C. The writing process
D. Rereading your writing

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

All writers get bogged down now and then. Accept the fact that sooner or later writer's block will happen to you. When it does, one response is to try to write something—no matter how awkward or imprecise it may seem. Just jot a reminder to yourself in the margin ("Fix this," "Redo," or "Ugh!") to fine-tune the section later. Another way to deal with a writing snag is leave a blank space—a spot for the right words when they finally come to mind at a later time. Then move on to an easier section, see if you can write that, and then return to the challenging part. It may also help to reread to yourself or out loud what you've already written. Regaining a sense of the large context may be enough to overcome writer's block. You might also try talking your way through a troublesome section. Like most people, you probably speak more easily than you write; by speaking aloud, you tap this oral fluency and put it to work in your writing.

What is the topic of the paragraph?

A. Writer's block
B. Writing and talking
C. The writing process
D. Rereading your writing

Explanation

The topic is referred to directly or indirectly in several sentences.

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

Which statement best expresses the main idea of the paragraph?

All writers get bogged down now and then. Accept the fact that sooner or later writer's block will happen to you. When it does, one response is to try to write something—no matter how awkward or imprecise it may seem. Just jot a reminder to yourself in the margin ("Fix this," "Redo," or "Ugh!") to fine-tune the section later. Another way to deal with a writing snag is leave a blank space—a spot for the right words when they finally come to mind at a later time. Then move on to an easier section, see if you can write that, and then return to the challenging part. It may also help to reread to yourself or out loud what you've already written. Regaining a sense of the large context may be enough to overcome writer's block. You might also try talking your way through a troublesome section. Like most people, you probably speak more easily than you write; by speaking aloud, you tap this oral fluency and put it to work in your writing.

A. Writing is not easy.
B. There are various ways to deal with writer's block.
C. Talking about what you are trying to write may help you break out of a writing snag.
D. Write easier sections of the paper first and come back later to a harder section.

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

B is the correct answer.

- All of the supporting details in the paragraph are about ways to deal with writer's block.
- Choice A is too broad.
- Choices B and C are too narrow. Each refers to only one specific way to deal with writer's block.

A. Writing is not easy.
B. There are various ways to deal with writer's block.
C. Talking about what you are trying to write may help you break out of a writing snag.
D. Write easier sections of the paper first and come back later to a harder section.

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

- When you read, you often have to **infer** — figure out on your own—the author's unstated main idea.
- The implied main idea you come up with should cover all or most of the details in the paragraph.

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

Hints for identifying the topic and main idea:

- Remember to look for **repeated words**.
- Mark **major supporting details**. Major details are often signaled by **addition words**.

Addition Words

one	to begin with	also	further
first (of all)	for one thing	in addition	furthermore
second(ly)	other	next	last (of all)
third(ly)	another	moreover	final(ly)

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

Read the paragraph below. Then answer the question.

Nonverbal messages are more emotionally powerful than verbal ones. Nonverbal behaviors tell people about our emotional state. When we want to convey how we feel about someone, language often fails us. Nonverbal messages are also more universal than verbal ones. Members of different linguistic groups must spend a lot of time and effort to learn each other's verbal codes, but they can communicate instantly by smiling or wrinkling their faces in disgust. Some researchers have shown a number of emotions to be expressed in the same way by members of different cultural groups. Last, nonverbal messages are more continuous and natural than spoken language. Because gestures and body movements flow into one another without obvious beginnings and endings, they seem to be a more natural part of our existence than words.

What is the **topic** of the paragraph?

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

Nonverbal messages are more emotionally powerful than verbal ones. Nonverbal behaviors tell people about our emotional state. When we want to convey how we feel about someone, language often fails us. Nonverbal messages are also more universal than verbal ones. Members of different linguistic groups must spend a lot of time and effort to learn each other's verbal codes, but they can communicate instantly by smiling or wrinkling their faces in disgust. Some researchers have shown a number of emotions to be expressed in the same way by members of different cultural groups. Last, nonverbal messages are more continuous and natural than spoken language. Because gestures and body movements flow into one another without obvious beginnings and endings, they seem to be a more natural part of our existence than words.

What is the **topic** of the paragraph? *Nonverbal messages*

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

Read the paragraph again. Then answer the question.

Nonverbal messages are more emotionally powerful than verbal ones. Nonverbal behaviors tell people about our emotional state. When we want to convey how we feel about someone, language often fails us. Nonverbal messages are also more universal than verbal ones. Members of different linguistic groups must spend a lot of time and effort to learn each other's verbal codes, but they can communicate instantly by smiling or wrinkling their faces in disgust. Some researchers have shown a number of emotions to be expressed in the same way by members of different cultural groups. Last, nonverbal messages are more continuous and natural than spoken language. Because gestures and body movements flow into one another without obvious beginnings and endings, they seem to be a more natural part of our existence than words.

What is the **implied main idea** of the paragraph?

IMPLIED MAIN IDEAS IN PARAGRAPHS

Nonverbal messages are more emotionally powerful than verbal ones. Nonverbal behaviors tell people about our emotional state. When we want to convey how we feel about someone, language often fails us. Nonverbal messages are **also** more universal than verbal ones. Members of different linguistic groups must spend a lot of time and effort to learn each other's verbal codes, but they can communicate instantly by smiling or wrinkling their faces in disgust. Some researchers have shown a number of emotions to be expressed in the same way by members of different cultural groups. **Last**, nonverbal messages are more continuous and natural than spoken language. Because gestures and body movements flow into one another without obvious beginnings and endings, they seem to be a more natural part of our existence than words.

What is the **implied main idea** of the paragraph?

Nonverbal messages have several advantages over verbal ones.

Explanation

Each of the **three major details** in the paragraph describes an advantage that nonverbal messages have over verbal messages. Note that two of the major details are signaled by **addition words**.

IMPLIED CENTRAL IDEAS IN LONGER PASSAGES

- As you learned in Chapter 2, the central idea in a longer passage is also called the **central point** or **thesis**.
- Often, authors of essays and textbook selections will state their central points or ideas in much the same ways as they state them in a single paragraph.

IMPLIED CENTRAL IDEAS IN LONGER PASSAGES

- Occasionally, the central point will be implied rather than stated directly.

- You can find the central point of a longer selection the same way you find the main idea in a paragraph—by **looking for the topic** and by **considering the supporting material**.

CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned the following:

- At times authors imply, or suggest, a main idea without stating it clearly in one sentence. In such cases, you must figure out that main idea by considering the supporting details.
- To find implied central points in longer reading selections, you must again look closely at the supporting material.

The next chapters—Chapters 5 and 6—will explain common ways that authors organize their material.

Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills

Fifth Edition

John Langan

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Chapter Five: Relationships I

- Authors use two common methods to show connections, or **relationships**, between ideas.
- These two methods are **transitions** and **patterns of organization**.

Two common types of relationships are

- Relationships that involve **addition**
- Relationships that involve **time**

TRANSITIONS

Which item below is easier to read and understand?

A. The weather at the North Pole is truly extreme. The average winter temperature is more than 20 degrees below zero.

B. The weather at the North Pole is truly extreme. First of all, the average winter temperature is more than 20 degrees below zero.

TRANSITIONS

Which item below is easier to read and understand?

A. The weather at the North Pole is truly extreme. The average winter temperature is more than 20 degrees below zero.

B. The weather at the North Pole is truly extreme. First of all, the average winter temperature is more than 20 degrees below zero.

The words ***first of all*** in the second item make it clear that the writer plans on explaining **two or more ways** the weather is extreme. This makes the second item easier to understand.

TRANSITIONS

Transitions are words or phrases (like *first of all*) that show relationships between ideas.

TRANSITIONS

Transitions can be seen as “bridge” words, carrying the reader across from one idea to the next:

The weather at the North Pole is truly extreme.

the average winter temperature is more than 20 degrees below zero.

TRANSITIONS

Two major types of transitions are words that show **addition** and words that show **time**.

TRANSITIONS
Words That Show Addition

Which item below is easier to read and understand?

A. A virus cannot move or grow. It can reproduce only inside a cell of another organism.

B. A virus cannot move or grow. Furthermore, it can reproduce only inside a cell of another organism.

TRANSITIONS
Words That Show Addition

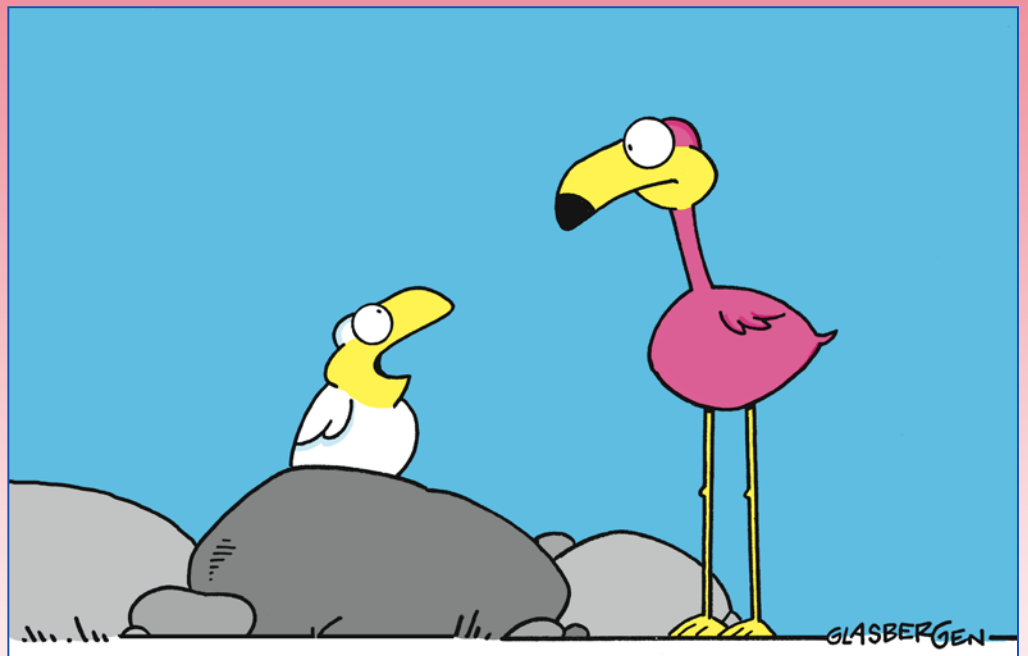
Which item below is easier to read and understand?

A. A virus cannot move or grow. It can reproduce only inside a cell of another organism.

B. A virus cannot move or grow. Furthermore, it can reproduce only inside a cell of another organism.

The word ***furthermore*** in the second item helps make the relationship between the two sentences clear. The author is listing **two different qualities** of a virus. *Furthermore* is an **addition word**.

TRANSITIONS
Words That Show Addition



"I can't marry you, Henry. First of all, you're too tall for me. In addition, I don't like pink."

In this cartoon, the words *In Addition* introduce a *second* reason why Henry's proposal is being rejected.

TRANSITIONS
Words That Show Addition

Addition words signal added ideas. These words tell you a writer is presenting one or more ideas that continue along the same line of thought as a previous idea.

Here are some common addition words:

Addition Words

one	to begin with	also	further
first (of all)	for one thing	in addition	furthermore
second(ly)	other	next	last (of all)
third(ly)	another	moreover	final(ly)

TRANSITIONS
Words That Show Addition

In the examples below, notice how the addition words introduce ideas that *add to* what has already been said.

- We communicate to exchange information. We **also** communicate to develop relationships.

- Tiger sharks eat fish, squid, sea turtles, seals, and smaller sharks. **Moreover**, they have been known to swallow car license plates and gasoline cans.

TRANSITIONS
Words That Show Time

Which item below is easier to read and understand?

A. I fill in the answers to the test questions I'm sure I know. I work on the rest of the exam.

B. First I fill in the answers to the test questions I'm sure I know. Then I work on the rest of the exam.

TRANSITIONS
Words That Show Time

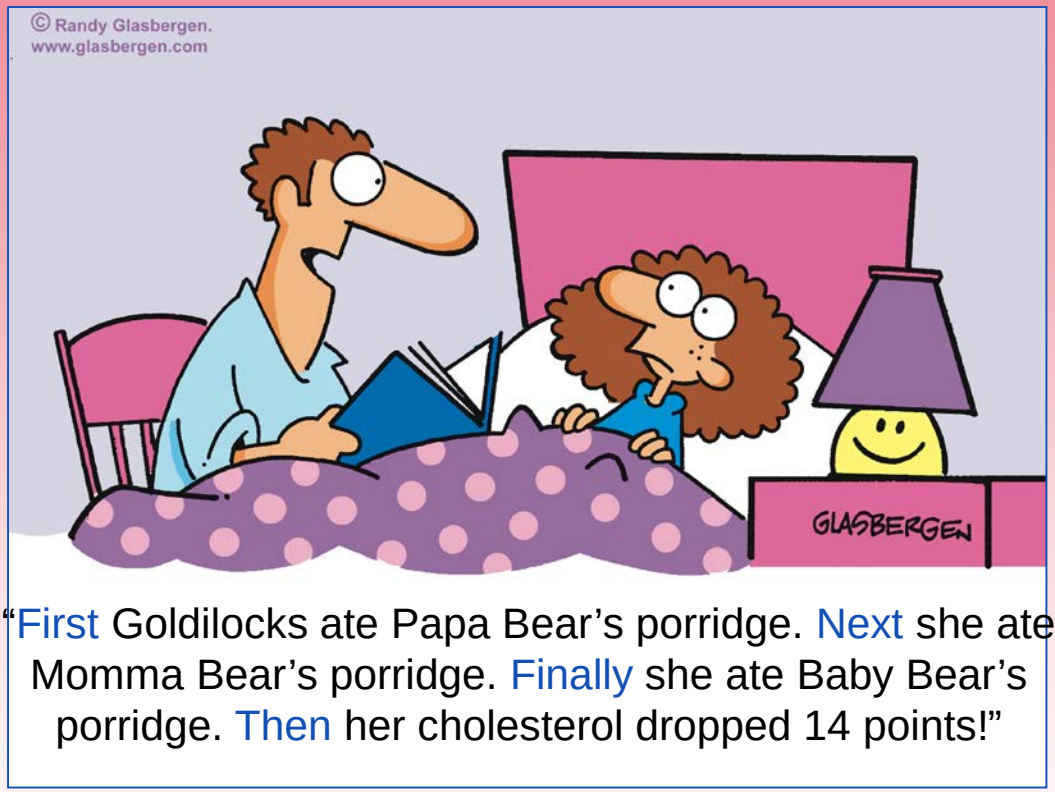
Which item below is easier to read and understand?

A. I fill in the answers to the test questions I'm sure I know. I work on the rest of the exam.

B. First I fill in the answers to the test questions I'm sure I know. Then I work on the rest of the exam.

The words ***First*** and ***then*** in the second item clarify the relationship between the sentences. The author begins working on the rest of the exam **after** answering the questions that he or she is sure about. ***First*****,** ***then***, and words like them are **time words**.

TRANSITIONS
Words That Show Time



"First Goldilocks ate Papa Bear's porridge. Next she ate Momma Bear's porridge. Finally she ate Baby Bear's porridge. Then her cholesterol dropped 14 points!"

In this cartoon, the **time words** *First*, *Next*, *Finally*, and *Then* indicate when each of the events happened in the story.

TRANSITIONS
Words That Show Time

Time words tell us *when* something happened in relation to when something else happened. Here are some common time words:

Time Words

before	immediately	when	until
previously	next	whenever	often
first (of all)	then	while	frequently
second(ly)	following	during	eventually
third(ly)	later	as (soon as)	final(ly)
now	after	by	last (of all)

Note: Additional ways of showing time are dates ("In 1890. . . ," "Throughout the 20th century. . . ," "By 2012. . .") and other time references ("Within a week. . . ," "by the end of the month. . . ," "in two years. . .").

TRANSITIONS
Words That Show Time

In the examples below, notice how the time words show us *when* something takes place.

- ***During*** the last ice age, there were huge icebergs in the ocean as far south as Mexico.

- I cross the street ***whenever*** I see someone coming whose name I've forgotten.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION

Just as transitions show relationships between ideas in sentences, **patterns of organization** show the relationships between supporting details in paragraphs, essays, and chapters.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION

Two major patterns of organization are

- **The list of items pattern**

  (Addition words are often used in this pattern of organization.)

- **The time order pattern**

  (Time words are often used in this pattern of organization.)

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The List of Items Pattern

- A **list of items** is a series of reasons, examples, or other details that support an idea.
- The items have no time order, but are listed in whatever order the author prefers.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The List of Items Pattern

See if you can arrange the following sentences in an order that makes sense. Which sentence should come first? Second? Third? Last? Use the addition words to guide you.

A. Another is the mythical Atlas, who was pictured holding up the heavens in an early collection of maps, and ever since, *atlas* has meant any book of maps.

B. The names of many people, real and fictional, have become permanent parts of the English language.

C. A third name-turned-word is that of John Montagu, the Earl of Sandwich, who got the idea of putting a piece of meat between two slices of bread; the result was the sandwich that bears his name.

D. One is Joseph Guillotin, a physician, who invented a machine for cutting off condemned prisoners' heads—the guillotine.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The List of Items Pattern

The names of many people, real and fictional, have become permanent parts of the English language. **One** is Joseph Guillotin, a physician, who invented a machine for cutting off condemned prisoners' heads—the guillotine. **Another** is the mythical Atlas, who was pictured holding up the heavens in an early collection of maps, and ever since, *atlas* has meant any book of maps. A **third** name-turned-word is that of John Montagu, the Earl of Sandwich, who got the idea of putting a piece of meat between two slices of bread; the result was the sandwich that bears his name.

The paragraph begins with the **main idea**: the names of many people, real and fictional, have become permanent parts of the English language. The next three sentences **list** people whose names have become parts of the language. Each one is introduced with an **addition transition**.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The List of Items Pattern

What major details are needed to complete the outline of this paragraph? The addition words are shown in **blue** to help you.

Self-disclosure is revealing information about oneself. Meaningful self-disclosure includes three important elements. First of all, it must be done on purpose. If you accidentally mention to a friend that you're thinking about quitting a job, that is not self-disclosure. Second, the information must be significant. Telling trivial facts, opinions, or feelings—that you like fudge, for example—hardly counts as disclosure. The third requirement is that the information being shared is private. There's nothing noteworthy about telling others that you are depressed or happy if they already know that.

Main idea: Meaningful self-disclosure includes three important elements.

1.

2.

3.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The List of Items Pattern

Addition words lead you to the major details the author has listed.

Self-disclosure is revealing information about oneself. Meaningful self-disclosure includes three important elements. First of all, it must be done on purpose. If you accidentally mention to a friend that you're thinking about quitting a job, that is not self-disclosure. Second, the information must be significant. Telling trivial facts, opinions, or feelings—that you like fudge, for example—hardly counts as disclosure. The third requirement is that the information being shared is private. There's nothing noteworthy about telling others that you are depressed or happy if they already know that.

Main idea: Meaningful self-disclosure includes three important elements.

1. Done on purpose
2. Significant
3. Private

Note the list words *three important elements* in the main idea. These words introduce the major details.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The Time Order Pattern

See if you can arrange the following sentences in logical order. Which sentence should come first? Second? Last? Use the time words as a guide.

A. The water then begins to expand and rise, to be replaced by cold water from the upper regions of the pot.

B. In the convection process, water from the bottom of a heating pot begins to move faster.

C. Eventually, after this heated water gets to the top, it cools off and sinks, to be replaced by newly heated water from the bottom.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The Time Order Pattern

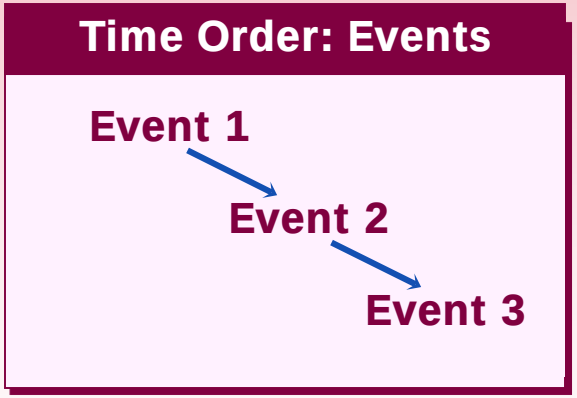
Here is the logical order for the sentences on the last screen.

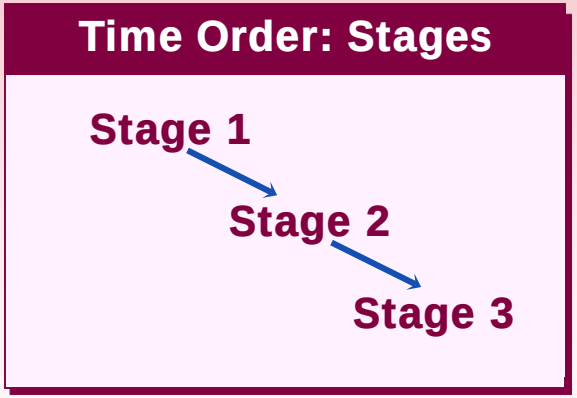
In the convection process, water from the bottom of a heating pot begins to move faster. The water then begins to expand and rise, to be replaced by cold water from the upper regions of the pot. Eventually, after this heated water gets to the top, it cools off and sinks, to be replaced by newly heated water from the bottom.

- In time order, the details are presented in the order in which they happen.
- Notice that supporting details are introduced by time words.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The Time Order Pattern

One of the most common kinds of time order is a series of **events** or **stages**.





PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The Time Order Pattern: Series of Events or Stages

What four stages of sleep are needed to complete the outline of this paragraph? The time words are shown in blue to help you.

The study of volunteers in sleep laboratories has led researchers to believe that humans go through four different stages of sleep in a normal night's rest. After falling asleep, people enter stage 1 sleep, also called "light sleep" or "REM" (rapid eye movement) sleep. During this stage the sleeper's brain waves are irregular, and the person is easily awakened. The next period of sleep, stage 2 sleep, is marked by bursts of fast brain-wave activity called "spindles." Then, during stage 3 sleep, the spindles disappear, and brain waves become long and slow. Last, the deepest level of sleep, during which the sleeper is hardest to awaken, occurs during stage 4 sleep. Extremely slow brain waves known as delta waves are present during this deep-sleep phase.

Main idea: Researchers believe that humans go through four different stages of sleep in a normal night's rest.

1.
2.
3.
4.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The Time Order Pattern: Series of Events or Stages

Time words lead you to the major details the author has listed.

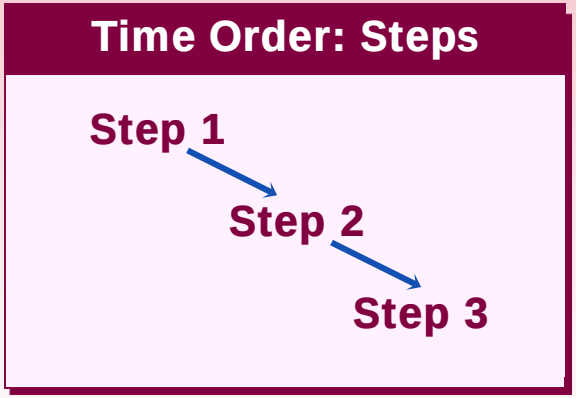
The study of volunteers in sleep laboratories has led researchers to believe that humans go through four different stages of sleep in a normal night's rest. After falling asleep, people enter stage 1 sleep, also called "light sleep" or "REM" (rapid eye movement) sleep. During this stage the sleeper's brain waves are irregular, and the person is easily awakened. The next period of sleep, stage 2 sleep, is marked by bursts of fast brain-wave activity called "spindles." Then, during stage 3 sleep, the spindles disappear, and brain waves become long and slow. Last, the deepest level of sleep, during which the sleeper is hardest to awaken, occurs during stage 4 sleep. Extremely slow brain waves known as delta waves are present during this deep-sleep phase.

Main idea: Researchers believe that humans go through four different stages of sleep in a normal night's rest.

1. Stage 1—light or REM sleep, irregular brain waves; easily awakened.
2. Stage 2—bursts of fast brain-wave activity called "spindles."
3. Stage 3—spindles disappear; brain waves become long and short.
4. Stage 4—deepest level; very slow brain waves called delta waves; more difficult to awaken

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The Time Order Pattern

Another common kind of time order is a series of **steps** (directions how to do something).



PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION

The Time Order Pattern: Series of Steps

What steps are needed to complete the outline of this paragraph? The time words are in blue to help you.

If you mention the word PROM to people, they are going to think of a high-school rite of passage. In fact, PROM is also the name of a proven study method. The first step in this system is to *preview* a reading assignment. Note the title and read the first and last paragraphs; also look quickly at headings and subheads and anything in boldface or italic. Next, *read* a selection straight through while marking off important ideas such as definitions, examples, and lists of items. The third step is to *organize* the material you've read by taking study notes on it. Get all the important ideas down on paper in outline form, relating one idea to another as much as possible. Last of all, *memorize* the study notes that you will need to remember for tests. Do this by writing key words in the margins of your study outline and turning those words into questions. Not all learning involves memorization, but some of it does, so don't hesitate to commit to memory anything you might need for a test.

Main idea: PROM is a proven study method.

1.
2.
3.
4.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION
The Time Order Pattern: Series of Steps

Time words lead you to the major details the author has listed.

If you mention the word PROM to people, they are going to think of a high-school rite of passage. In fact, PROM is also the name of a proven study method. The first step in this system is to *preview* a reading assignment. Note the title and read the first and last paragraphs; also look quickly at headings and subheads and anything in boldface or italic. Next, *read* a selection straight through while marking off important ideas such as definitions, examples, and lists of items. The third step is to *organize* the material you've read by taking study notes on it. Get all the important ideas down on paper in outline form, relating one idea to another as much as possible. Last of all, *memorize* the study notes that you will need to remember for tests. Do this by writing key words in the margins of your study outline and turning those words into questions. Not all learning involves memorization, but some of it does, so don't hesitate to commit to memory anything you might need for a test.

Main idea: PROM is a proven study method.

1. Preview a reading assignment.
2. Read the selection straight through, marking off important ideas.
3. Organize the material you've read by taking study notes on it.
4. Memorize the study notes by turning key words into questions.

CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned how authors use transitions and patterns of organization to make their ideas clear. Just as transitions show relationships between ideas in sentences, patterns of organization show relationships between supporting details in paragraphs and longer pieces of writing.

You also learned two common kinds of relationships that authors use to make their ideas clear:

- **Addition relationships**
  - Authors often present a list or series of reasons, examples, or other details that support an idea. The items have no time order, but are listed in whatever order the author prefers.
  - Transition words that signal such addition relationships include *for one thing*, *second*, *also*, *in addition*, and *finally*.
- **Time relationships**
  - Authors usually discuss a series of events or steps in the order in which they happen, resulting in a time order.
  - Transition words that signal such time relationships include *first*, *next*, *then*, *after*, and *last*.

The next chapter—Chapter 6—will help you learn three other important kinds of relationships: definition-example, comparison and/or contrast, and cause-effect.

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John Langan

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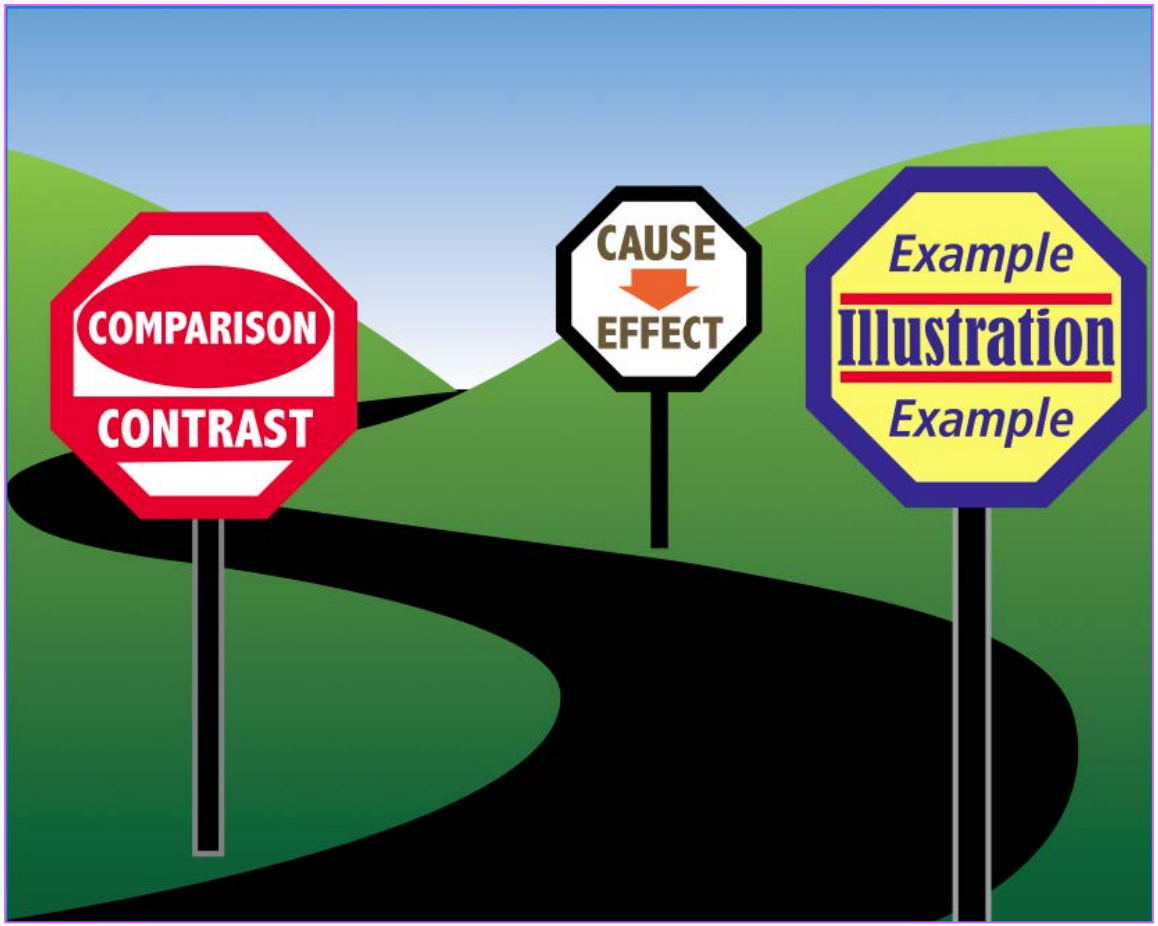
Chapter Six: Relationships II



RELATIONSHIPS

Besides relationships involving addition and time, there are three other common types of relationships:

- Relationships that involve **illustration**
- Relationships that involve **comparison and contrast**
- Relationships that involve **cause and effect**

ILLUSTRATION
Words That Show Illustration

Which item below is easier to understand?

A. Certain types of anxiety are very common. Most people feel anxious at the thought of speaking in front of a large group.

B. Certain types of anxiety are very common. For instance, most people feel anxious at the thought of speaking in front of a large group.

ILLUSTRATION
Words That Show Illustration

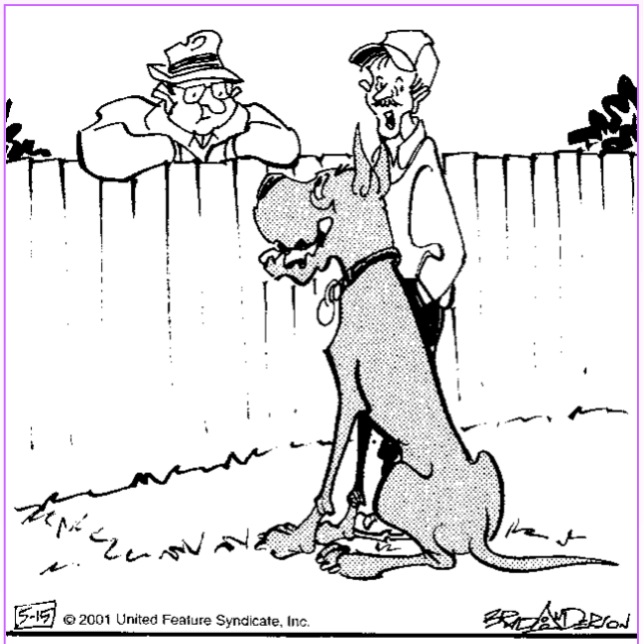
Which item below is easier to understand?

A. Certain types of anxiety are very common. Most people feel anxious at the thought of speaking in front of a large group.

B. Certain types of anxiety are very common. For instance, most people feel anxious at the thought of speaking in front of a large group.

The words ***for instance*** make the second item easier to understand. They make it clear that speaking in front of a large group is **one type** of common anxiety. *For instance* and other words and phrases like it are **illustration words**.

ILLUSTRATION
Words That Show Illustration



"He's been acting strange lately. For instance,
when I ask him to sit, he actually sits."

In this cartoon, the owner gives an example of his dog's strange behavior—the dog actually obeys a command! The owner signals the example with the illustration words *for instance*.

ILLUSTRATION
Words That Show Illustration

Illustration words indicate that an author will provide one or more *examples* to develop and clarify a given idea.

Here are some common words that show illustration:

Illustration Words

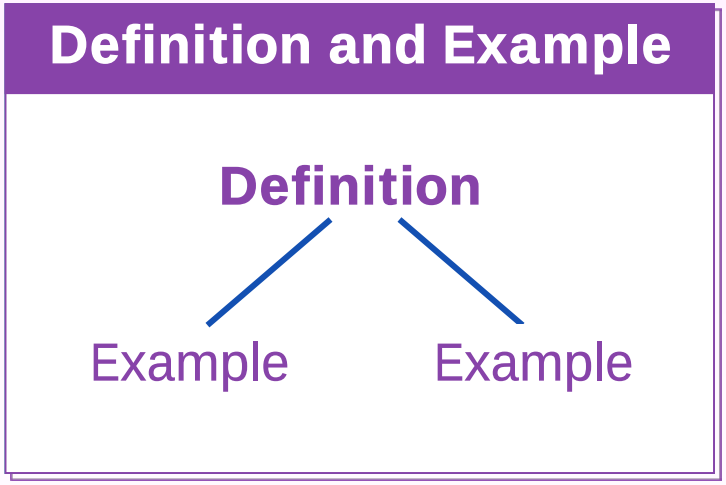
(for) example	including	(as an) illustration	one
(for) instance	specifically	to illustrate	once
such as	to be specific		

ILLUSTRATION
Words That Show Illustration

In the sentences below, notice how the illustration words signal that one or more *examples* are coming.

- Birds sing for various reasons, *such as* to proclaim territory, to signal hunger, or to attract a mate.
- Some common beliefs about the United States are really myths. *For example*, Betsy Ross did not design the American flag.

ILLUSTRATION
The Definition and Example Pattern



The **definition and example pattern of organization** includes just what its name suggests: a definition and one or more examples.

ILLUSTRATION
The Definition and Example Pattern

See if you can arrange the following sentences in an order that makes sense. Which sentence should come first? Second? Last?

A. For instance, a football player recovering from an operation may want to return to his team, yet he also knows that he may limp for the rest of his life if he is injured again.

B. An approach-avoidance conflict is a situation in which someone is both attracted to and repelled by the same goal.

C. People who are loyal to their present employer but are interested in a new and better job are another example.

ILLUSTRATION
The Definition and Example Pattern

Here is the logical order for the sentences on the last screen.

An approach-avoidance conflict is a situation in which someone is both attracted to and repelled by the same goal. **For instance**, a football player recovering from an operation may want to return to his team, yet he also knows that he may limp for the rest of his life if he is injured again. People who are loyal to their present employer but are interested in a new and better job are another **example**.

The paragraph begins with a **definition** of *approach-avoidance conflict*. The second and third sentences provide **examples** of the term. Each example is signaled by an illustration word or phrase.

ILLUSTRATION
The Definition and Example Pattern

- Textbook authors often provide definitions of important terms, followed by examples. They usually set off the terms they are defining in *italic* or **boldface** type.

- When reading and taking notes on a textbook, always do two things:
  1. Write down key **definitions**.
  2. Write down a helpful **example** for each definition.

ILLUSTRATION
The Definition and Example Pattern

Read the textbook paragraph below and then answer the questions.

(1)A loss leader is a product or service that sells at a loss but generates customer interest that can lead to a later profit. (2)A classic example of a loss leader is the ice-cream counter at a Thrifty's variety store. (3)Ice cream cones are sold for less than the cost of the stand, equipment, supplies, and labor. (4)But the ice-cream counter, strategically placed near the store entrance, helps draw customers into the store. (5)Once inside, they often buy other items as well, so the store turns an overall profit. (6)The loss-leader principle is used in many other applications. (7)For instance, television networks take a loss on special events like the Olympic Games because they believe that the viewers they attract will then "stay tuned" for their other, moneymaking shows.

1. What term is being defined?
2. Which sentence contains the definition?
3. In which sentence does the first example appear?
4. In which sentence does the second example appear?

ILLUSTRATION
The Definition and Example Pattern

Read the textbook paragraph below and then answer the questions.

(1)A loss leader is a product or service that sells at a loss but generates customer interest that can lead to a later profit. (2)A classic example of a loss leader is the ice-cream counter at a Thrifty's variety store. (3)Ice cream cones are sold for less than the cost of the stand, equipment, supplies, and labor. (4)But the ice-cream counter, strategically placed near the store entrance, helps draw customers into the store. (5)Once inside, they often buy other items as well, so the store turns an overall profit. (6)The loss-leader principle is used in many other applications. (7)For instance, television networks take a loss on special events like the Olympic Games because they believe that the viewers they attract will then "stay tuned" for their other, moneymaking shows.

1. What term is being defined? *loss leader*
2. Which sentence contains the definition? *sentence 1*
3. In which sentence does the first example appear? *sentence 2*
4. In which sentence does the second example appear? *sentence 7*

Notice that each example is introduced by an illustration word.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
Words That Show Comparison

Which item below is easier to understand?

A. The computerized scanner has streamlined the supermarket checkout line. Computerized fingerprint identification allows the police to do in seconds what once took two hours.

B. The computerized scanner has streamlined the supermarket checkout line. Similarly, computerized fingerprint identification allows the police to do in seconds what once took two hours.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
Words That Show Comparison

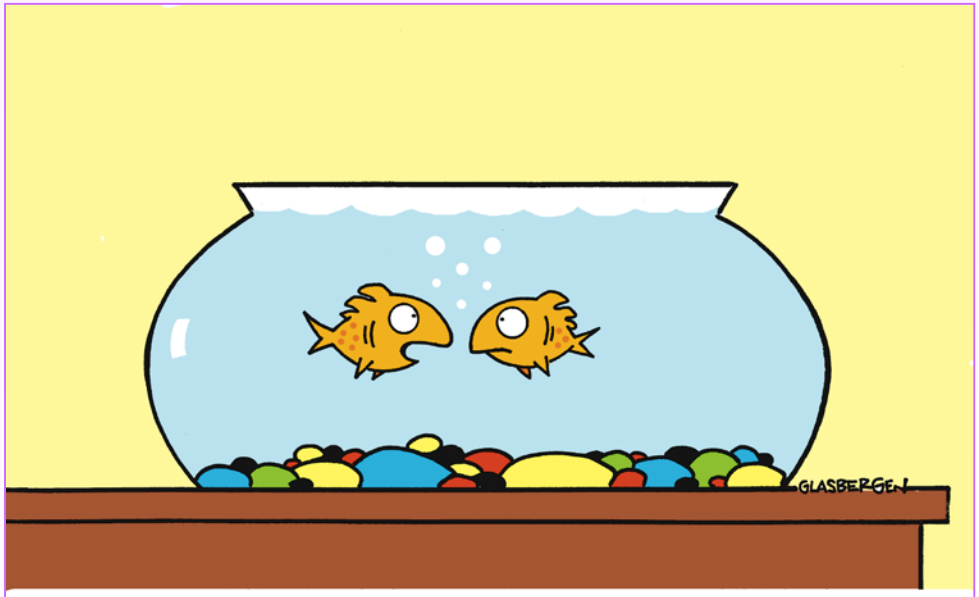
Which item below is easier to understand?

A. The computerized scanner has streamlined the supermarket checkout line. Computerized fingerprint identification allows the police to do in seconds what once took two hours.

B. The computerized scanner has streamlined the supermarket checkout line. Similarly, computerized fingerprint identification allows the police to do in seconds what once took two hours.

In the second item, the word ***similarly*** makes it clear that the author is **comparing** the benefits of computerization in both types of work. *Similarly* and other words like it are **comparison words**.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
Words That Show Comparison



"What do you mean you can't marry me? We're perfect for each other. We look exactly alike, and we both love to swim."

In this cartoon, the words *alike* and *both* indicated that a comparison is being made: if the two goldfish are so much like each other, the deserve to be together.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
Words That Show Comparison

Comparison words signal similarities. Authors use a comparison transition to show that a second idea is *like* the first one in some way.

Here are some common words that show comparison:

Comparison Words

(just) as	both	in like fashion	in a similar fashion
(just) like	equal(ly)	in like manner	in a similar manner
alike	resemble	similar(ly)	(in) the same way
same	likewise	similarity	(in) common

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
Words That Show Comparison

In the sentences below, notice how the comparison words show that things are *alike* in some way.

- *Both* alligators and crocodiles use nerve-packed bumps in their jaws to sense the movement of nearby prey.
- Surveys show that women who work out of the home and stay-at-home moms are *equally* concerned about their children's welfare.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
Words That Show Contrast

Which item below is easier to understand?

A. The company pays the manager handsomely. He doesn't do much work.

B. The company pays the manager handsomely even though he doesn't do much work.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
Words That Show Contrast

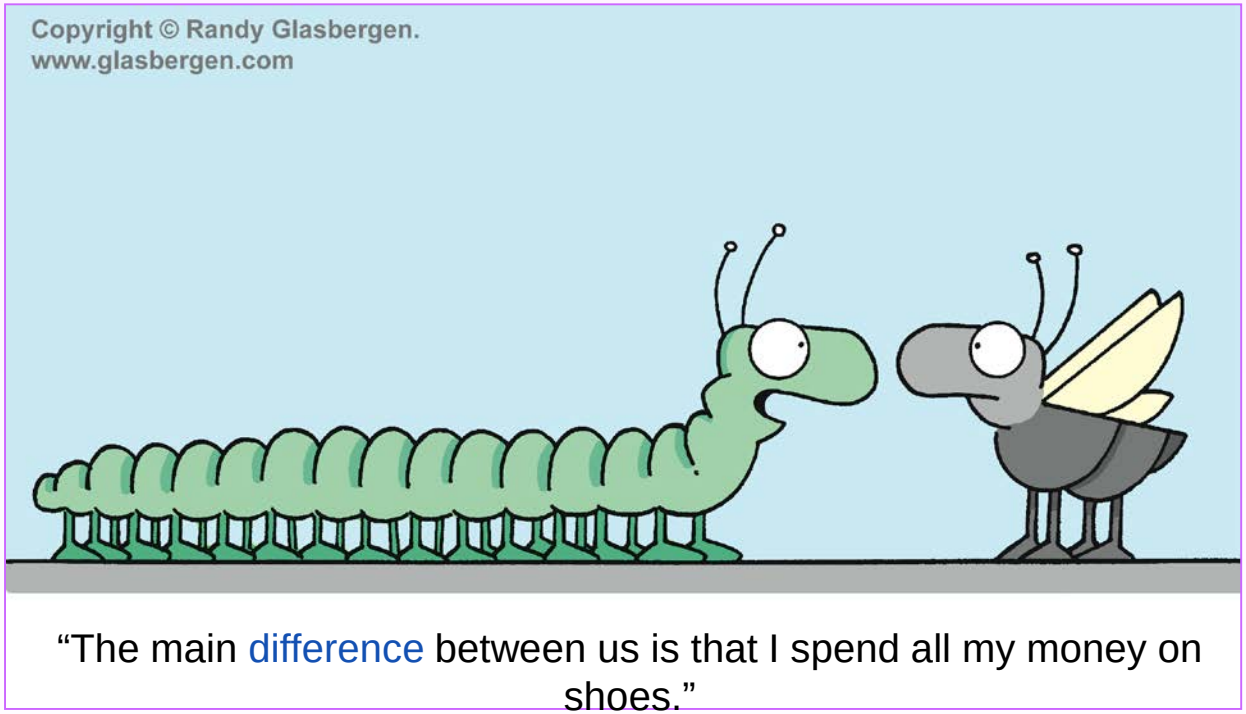
Which item below is easier to understand?

A. The company pays the manager handsomely. He doesn't do much work.

B. The company pays the manager handsomely even though he doesn't do much work.

The first item is puzzling: does the company pay the manager well *because* he doesn't do much work? The second item makes it clear that the company pays him well ***even though*** he doesn't do much work. *Even though* and words and phrases like it are **contrast words**.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
Words That Show Contrast



"The main difference between us is that I spend all my money on shoes."

In this cartoon, the speaker uses the contrast word *difference* to signal a major distinction between the two insects.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
Words That Show Contrast

Contrast words signal that an author is pointing out differences between two subjects. Authors use them to show how two things *differ* in one or more ways.

Here are some common words that show contrast:

Contrast Words

but	instead (of)	even though	difference
yet	in contrast	as opposed to	different(ly)
however	on the other hand	in spite of	differ (from)
although	on the contrary	despite	unlike
nevertheless	converse(ly)	rather than	while
still	opposite		

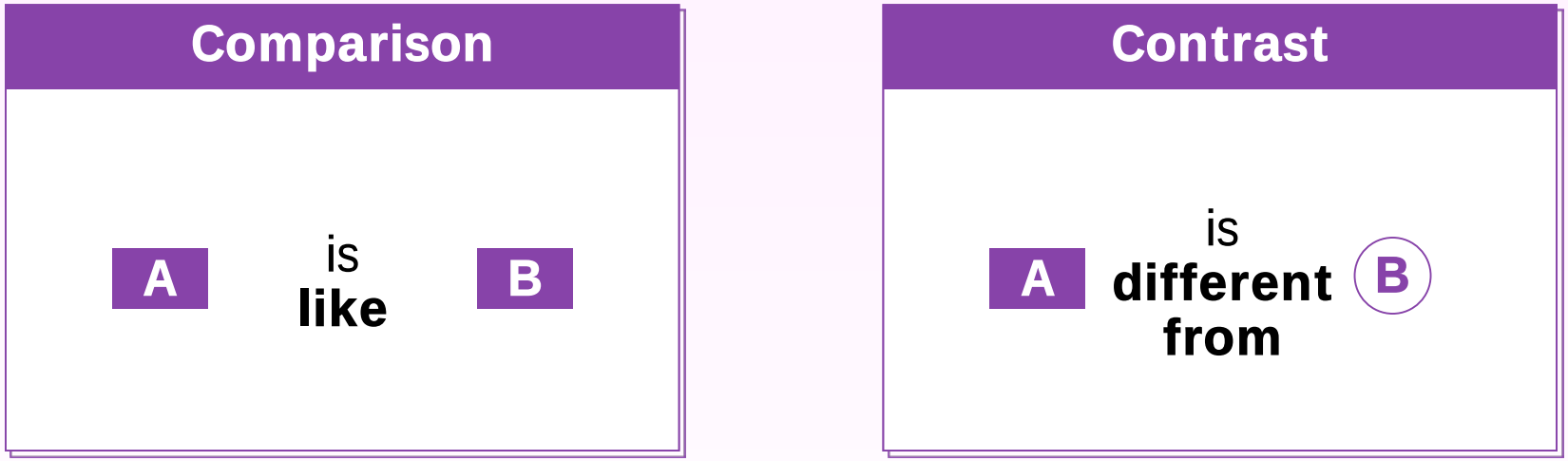
COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
Words That Show Contrast

In the sentences below, notice how the contrast words signal that one idea is *different from* another idea.

- Women communicate *differently* in the workplace than men do.
- The average person can safely tolerate ten bee stings for each pound of body weight. This means that the average adult could withstand more than a thousand stings. *However,* one sting can cause death in a person who is allergic to such stings.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

The Comparison and/or Contrast Pattern



The **comparison-contrast pattern** shows how two things are alike or how they are different, or both.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
The Comparison and/or Contrast Pattern

See if you can arrange the following sentences in an order that makes sense. Which sentence should come first? Second? Last?

A. They are alike in offering health-care services for patients suffering from injury or disease.

B. Hospices and hospitals are much more different than they are similar.

C. However, the goal of a hospital is to make patients well, while the concern of a hospice is to relieve the pain and suffering of dying patients.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST
The Comparison and/or Contrast Pattern

Here is the logical order for the sentences on the last screen.

Hospices and hospitals are much more different than they are similar. They are alike in offering health-care services for patients suffering from injury or disease. However, the goal of a hospital is to make patients well, while the concern of a hospice is to relieve the pain and suffering of dying patients.

The **contrast word** *different* in the first sentence suggests a comparison and/or contrast pattern of organization. The **comparison word** *alike* and **contrast words** *However* and *while* the other two sentences show that hospices and hospitals are being both compared *and* contrasted.

CAUSE AND EFFECT
Words That Show Cause and Effect

Which item below is easier to understand?

A. The young woman decided to go away to school. Her boyfriend began talking about getting married.

B. The young woman decided to go away to school because her boyfriend began talking about getting married.

CAUSE AND EFFECT
Words That Show Cause and Effect

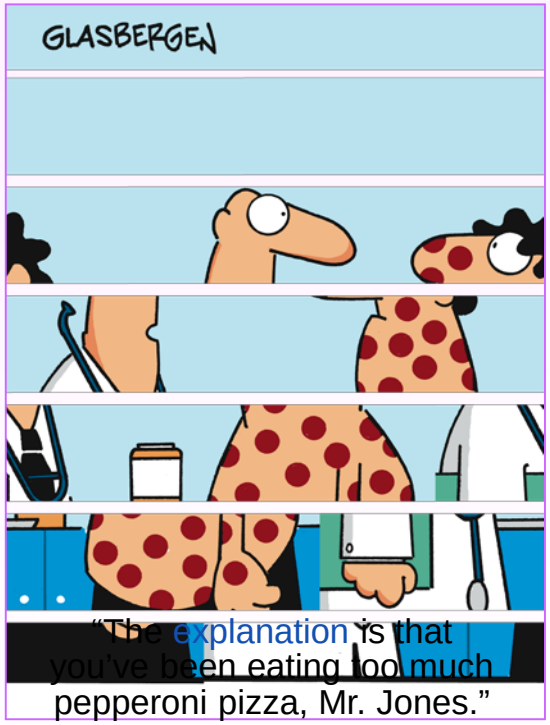
Which item below is easier to understand?

A. The young woman decided to go away to school. Her boyfriend began talking about getting married.

B. The young woman decided to go away to school because her boyfriend began talking about getting married.

In the first item, we're not sure about the relationship between the two sentences. The word ***because*** in the second item makes it clear that the woman decided to go away **as a result of** her boyfriend's interest in marriage. *Because* and words like it are **cause and effect words**.

CAUSE AND EFFECT
Words That Show Cause and Effect



"The explanation is that you've been eating too much pepperoni pizza, Mr. Jones."

"Your problem is the result of not drinking enough water."

In the cartoon on the left, the doctor is explaining that the reason Mr. Jones is covered with red spots is that he has been eating too much pepperoni pizza. In the cartoon on the right, the result of not drinking enough water is that the patient has turned into a cactus!

CAUSE AND EFFECT
Words That Show Cause and Effect

Cause and effect words signal that the author is explaining *the reason why* something happened or *the result* of something happening.

Here are some common words that show cause and effect:

Cause and Effect Words

therefore	so	owing to	because (of)
thus	(as a) result	effect	reason
(as a) consequence	results in	cause	explanation
consequently	leads to	if . . . then	accordingly
due to	since	affect	

CAUSE AND EFFECT
Words That Show Cause and Effect

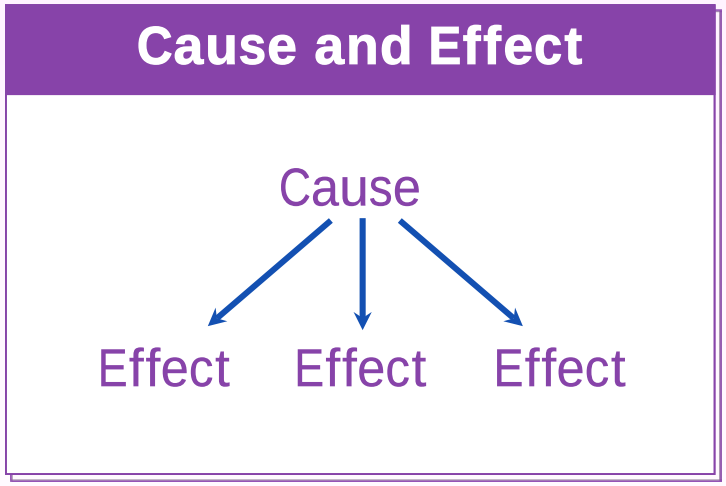
In the sentences below, notice how the cause and effect words introduce a *reason* for something or the *result* of something.

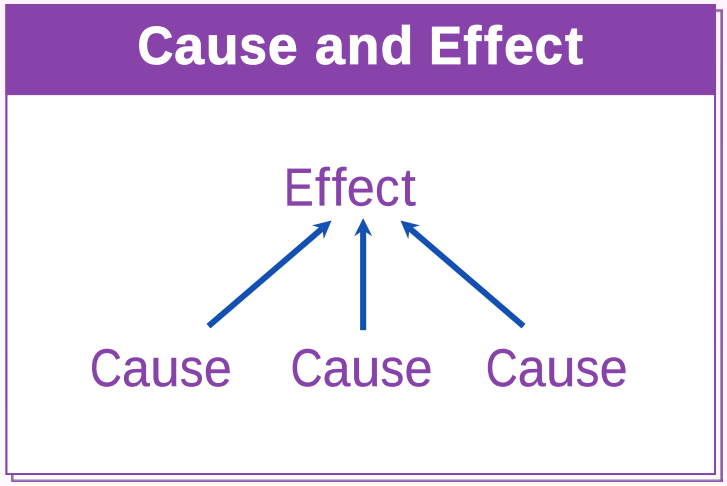
- The first street traffic lights were created in 1920 by a Detroit policeman. He picked the colors red, yellow, and green *because* railroads used them.

- Don’t eat an egg that has a crack in it. The *reason* is that the egg may be contaminated.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

The Cause and Effect Pattern





An author uses the **cause and effect pattern** to show why something happens or the effects of something that has happened.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

The Cause and Effect Pattern

See if you can arrange the following sentences in an order that makes sense. Which sentence should come first? Second? Last?

A. As a result, federal authorities required that ships carry enough lifeboats to save everyone on board.

B. The sinking of the ship *Titanic* led to safer sea travel.

C. When the *Titanic* sank, many died because there were too few lifeboats.

CAUSE AND EFFECT
The Cause and Effect Pattern

Here is the logical order for the sentences on the last screen.

The sinking of the ship *Titanic* **led to** safer sea travel. When the *Titanic* sank, many died **because** there were too few lifeboats. **As a result**, federal authorities required that ships carry enough lifeboats to save everyone on board.

Each sentence has a cause and effect word or phrase, suggesting the cause and effect the pattern or organization. The sinking of the ship had the effect of making sea travel safer. The lack of lifeboats caused many deaths. The many deaths caused federal authorities to institute requirements about lifeboats.

CAUSE AND EFFECT
A Final Point

A paragraph or passage may often be made up of more than one pattern of organization.

According to the United Nations, women in poor countries have lives very different from, and worse than, the lives of men in those countries. For one thing, women have much lower literacy rates than men. In South Asia, females' literacy rates are only around 50 percent of males'. In addition, women lag far behind in education. The females' rates for secondary education represent 72 percent of the men's rates and, for college education, only 51 percent. Also, women in poor countries have fewer opportunities for paid employment. There are only fifty-eight women employees for every one hundred men, and they are paid considerably less. Women not gainfully employed are far from idle, however. In fact, they usually work an average of twelve hours a day, while men work only eight hours.

This paragraph contrasts women in poor countries with men in the same countries. It also uses a list of items pattern, listing points of contrast between men and women regarding literacy, education, and so forth.

CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned about three kinds of relationships that authors use to make their ideas clear:

- **Definitions and examples**
  - — To help readers understand the important ideas and terms in a subject, textbook authors often take time to include key definitions (often setting them off in *italic* or **boldface**) and examples of those definitions. When reading a textbook, it is usually a good idea to mark off both definitions and examples.
  - — Transition words that signal the definition and example pattern include *for example*, *for instance*, *to illustrate*, and *such as*.
- **Comparison and/or contrast**
  - — Authors often discuss how two things are alike or how they are different, or both.
  - — Transition words that signal comparisons include *alike* and *similar*.
  - — Transition words that signal contrasts include *but*, *however*, and *in contrast*.

(Chapter Review continues on next slide)

CHAPTER REVIEW, continued

- **Cause and effect**
  - — Authors often discuss the reasons why something happens or the effects of something that has happened.
  - — Transition words that signal causes include *reason* and *because*.
  - — Transition words that signal effects include *therefore*, *consequently*, and *as a result*.

Note that pages 276–282 in the textbook list and offer practice in all the transitions and patterns of organization covered in "Relationships I" and "Relationships II."

The next chapter—Chapter 7—will sharpen your ability to make inferences in reading.

Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills

Fifth Edition

John Langan

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Chapter Seven: Inferences

- Many important ideas in reading are not stated directly.
- Discovering these ideas is called **making inferences** or **drawing conclusions**.

INFERENCES

Which **inference** is more logically based on the information in this cartoon?

A. The man was probably working on a home improvement or repair project.

B. The man deliberately ruined the woman's pan.

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INFERENCES

Which **inference** is more logically based on the information in this cartoon?

YOU USED MY GOOD PAN AS A HAMMER?
YEAH. I COULDN'T FIND MINE.
HERE. IF YOU'RE FINISHED, I'D LIKE TO HAMMER SOMETHING.
2-28
WISE/ALDRICH

A. The man was probably working on a home improvement or repair project.

Since the man was using a kitchen pan as a hammer, he must have been somewhere where there is a kitchen—probably his and the woman's home.

B. The man deliberately ruined the woman's pan.

The man's explanation—he couldn't find his hammer—suggests that he simply needed something to hammer with. Nothing suggests that he intentionally ruined the pan.

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INFERENCES

Which **inference** is more logically based on the information in this cartoon?

C. The woman is upset that the man has used her pan as a hammer.

D. The man realizes that the woman is angry at him for using her good pan as a hammer.

YOU USED MY GOOD PAN AS A HAMMER?
YEAH. I COULDN'T FIND MINE.
HERE. IF YOU'RE FINISHED, I'D LIKE TO HAMMER SOMETHING.
2-28
WISE/ALDRICH

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INFERENCES

Which **inference** is more logically based on the information in this cartoon?

YOU USED MY GOOD PAN AS A HAMMER?
YEAH. I COULDN'T FIND MINE.
HERE. IF YOU'RE FINISHED, I'D LIKE TO HAMMER SOMETHING.
2-28
NISE/ALDRICH

C. The woman is upset that the man has used her pan as a hammer.

The woman's final comment strongly suggests that she is angry and needs to let out her anger, quite possibly by hammering the person who ruined her pan.

D. The man realizes that the woman is angry at him for using her good pan as a hammer.

Nothing in the man's body language or words indicates that he realizes the woman is angry with him.

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INFERENCES IN READING

Which **inference** is more firmly based on the information in the passage?

Jim Johnson panicked when he came home from work to find his neighbor's pet rabbit dead and in the jaws of his German shepherd, Fido. Johnson took the filthy, slightly chewed-up bunny into his house, washed it with care, and then used the blow dryer to restore its fur as best he could. A short time later he secretly put the rabbit back into its outdoor cage.

The next day, Jim's neighbor stopped him as they were both doing yard work. "Did you hear that Thumper died?"

"Uh, no," stammered Johnson.

"We went out a couple days ago and found him dead. What's really weird, though, is that the day after we buried him, we went outside and discovered that someone had dug him up, given him a bath, styled his fur, and put him back into his cage!"

A. Johnson's neighbor had children who took care of the rabbit.

B. Fido had probably dug up the rabbit's grave.

INFERENCES IN READING

Which **inference** is more firmly based on the information in the passage?

Jim Johnson panicked when he came home from work to find his neighbor's pet rabbit dead and in the jaws of his German shepherd, Fido. Johnson took the filthy, slightly chewed-up bunny into his house, washed it with care, and then used the blow dryer to restore its fur as best he could. A short time later he secretly put the rabbit back into its outdoor cage.

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"We went out a couple days ago and found him dead. What's really weird, though, is that the day after we buried him, we went outside and discovered that someone had dug him up, given him a bath, styled his fur, and put him back into his cage!"

A. Johnson's neighbor had children who took care of the rabbit.

There is no mention of Johnson's children.

B. Fido had probably dug up the rabbit's grave.

Since the rabbit had been buried, it is logical to infer that the only way Fido could have gotten it was to dig it up.

INFERENCES IN READING

Which **inference** is most firmly based on the information in the passage?

Jim Johnson panicked when he came home from work to find his neighbor's pet rabbit dead and in the jaws of his German shepherd, Fido. Johnson took the filthy, slightly chewed-up bunny into his house, washed it with care, and then used the blow dryer to restore its fur as best he could. A short time later he secretly put the rabbit back into its outdoor cage.

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"We went out a couple days ago and found him dead. What's really weird, though, is that the day after we buried him, we went outside and discovered that someone had dug him up, given him a bath, styled his fur, and put him back into his cage!"

C. The neighbor was convinced that Johnson had dug up the rabbit.

D. Jim Johnson assumed his dog had killed the rabbit.

E. The rabbit had been very sick.

INFERENCES IN READING

Which **inference** is most firmly based on the information in the passage?

Jim Johnson panicked when he came home from work to find his neighbor's pet rabbit dead and in the jaws of his German shepherd, Fido. Johnson took the filthy, slightly chewed-up bunny into his house, washed it with care, and then used the blow dryer to restore its fur as best he could. A short time later he secretly put the rabbit back into its outdoor cage.

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C. The neighbor was convinced that Johnson had dug up the rabbit.

The matter-of-fact way the neighbor told Jim about Thumper suggests that he did not suspect Johnson had anything to do with it.

D. Jim Johnson assumed his dog had killed the rabbit.

Johnson's efforts to cover up what happened to Thumper imply that he believed his dog had killed it.

E. The rabbit had been very sick.

There is no suggestion that the rabbit had been sick.

INFERENCES IN READING

Which **inference** is more firmly based on the information in the passage?

Early one morning, a man was walking along a sandy, deserted beach. At least he thought it was deserted. As he gazed ahead of him, he noticed that there was another human figure in sight. It was a boy who kept bending down, picking something up, and throwing it into the sea. He repeated the movement again and again and again.

As the man drew near, he saw that the sand surrounding the boy was covered with starfish that had been washed in by the waves. It was these stranded starfish that the boy was throwing into the water.

"Why are you doing that?" the man asked.

Not pausing, the boy replied, "The tide is going out, and the sun is rising. Soon the heat will be too much for the starfish, and they will die."

The man shook his head tolerantly. "My dear boy," he said. "There are miles of beach and hundreds, maybe thousands of starfish. You can't save them all. What you're doing can't make a difference!"

The boy listened politely, then picked up the next starfish and threw it in the water. "It makes a difference for this one," he answered.

A. The boy knows he cannot save all the starfish.

B. The man believes the boy's efforts are admirable.

INFERENCES IN READING

Which **inference** is more firmly based on the information in the passage?

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The boy listened politely, then picked up the next starfish and threw it in the water. "It makes a difference for this one," he answered.

A. The boy knows he cannot save all the starfish.

The boy doesn't show any surprise when the man tells him he can't save all the starfish. Also, the boy's obvious understanding of the shore cycles makes it clear he knows how few starfish he could save. He indicates he still wants to save the ones he can.

B. The man believes the boy's efforts are admirable.

The man is "tolerant" of what the boy is doing, but he suggests the boy's actions are pointless.

INFERENCES IN READING

Which **inference** is more firmly based on the information in the passage?

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The boy listened politely, then picked up the next starfish and threw it in the water. "It makes a difference for this one," he answered.

C. The man decides to help save some of the stranded starfish.

D. The boy believes that a little help is better than nothing.

INFERENCES IN READING

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The boy listened politely, then picked up the next starfish and threw it in the water. "It makes a difference for this one," he answered.

C. The man decides to help save some of the stranded starfish.

The man does not indicate that he will help save the starfish.

D. The boy believes that a little help is better than nothing.

The boy's efforts to save as many starfish as he can indicate that he does believe that a little help is better than none.

INFERENCES IN READING

Guidelines for Making Inferences in Reading

1 Never lose sight of **available information**.

As much as possible, base your inferences on facts.

2 Use your **background information** and **experience** to help you in making inferences.

The more you know about a subject, the better your inferences are likely to be.

3 Consider the **alternatives**.

Don’t simply accept the first inference that comes to mind.

INFERENCES IN LITERATURE

Inferences are very important in **reading literature**.

A nonfiction writer might write:
The little boy was in a stubborn mood.

The novelist might write:
When Todd's mother asked him to stop playing in the yard and come indoors, he didn't even look up but shouted "No!" and then spelled it out, "N…O!"

- Writers of factual material **directly state** much of what they mean.
- Writers of fiction **show** what they mean.

INFERENCES IN LITERATURE

Poetry, especially, by its nature, implies much of its meaning. For example, read the following poem by Carl Sandburg.

> The fog comes
> on little cat feet.
>
> It sits looking
> over harbor and city
> on silent haunches
> and then moves on.

Here, Sandburg uses a figure of speech known as a metaphor, comparing fog to a cat that makes a sudden, silent, almost mysterious appearance.

INFERENCES IN LITERATURE
A Note on Figures of Speech

- Creative writers often use comparisons known as **figures of speech** to imply their meanings.

- The two most common figures of speech are **similes** and **metaphors**.

INFERENCES IN LITERATURE
A Note on Figures of Speech

Simile — a stated comparison, introduced with *like*, *as*, or *as if*.

The man says that because the boss chewed him out, he felt "like a piece of old bubble gum." The simile clearly shows that the man's feelings have been hurt.

"The boss was really angry about the suggestion I made. He chewed me out! I felt like a piece of old bubble gum!"

INFERENCES IN LITERATURE
A Note on Figures of Speech

Other Examples of Similes

- Many or the players on the football team have arms *as big as tree trunks.*
- After I lost my job, my material possessions soon disappeared *like so much dandelion fluff in a wind*.
- When my new boyfriend arrived, my parents stared at him *as if he were a cockroach who had just come under the door*.

INFERENCES IN LITERATURE
A Note on Figures of Speech

Metaphor—an implied comparison, with *like, as,* or *as if* omitted.

LOOK AT THIS CARTOON, LUCY, AND TELL ME IF YOU THINK IT'S FUNNY
WHO DREW IT?
I DREW IT...
THEN I DON'T THINK IT'S FUNNY!
6-14-08
BIG SISTERS ARE THE CRAB GRASS IN THE LAWN OF LIFE!
SCHULZ

In this cartoon, the boy, Linus, is using a metaphor when he says that big sisters are "the crab grass in the lawn of life." He means that big sisters spoil things and are a nuisance.

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INFERENCES IN LITERATURE
A Note on Figures of Speech

Other Examples of Metaphors

- From the airplane, I looked down on Manhattan, *an anthill of frantic life*.
- Our boss is always a *bear* on Monday morning.
- My aunt's home was a *pack-rat's nest* of everything she had collected during her life.

INFERENCES IN TABLES AND GRAPHS

- Just as pictures and reading material require inferences, so do **tables** and **graphs**.

- To infer the ideas presented in tables and graphs, you must **consider all the information presented**.

INFERENCES IN TABLES AND GRAPHS
Steps in Reading a Table or Graph

1 Read the title.

What is the **title** of the table below?

The Bingeing Phenomenon

Many college students drink heavily;
shown below is the percentage of students in each category who binge.

Age	
Under 21	45%
21-23	48
24+	28
College residences	
Fraternity/sorority	84%
Coed dorm	52
Off-campus housing	40
Single-sex dorm	38

Race	
White	48%
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Nonparticipant	36%
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Team leader	58
Attitude	
Frequent bingers who think they drink lightly/moderately	
Male	91%
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SOURCES: Harvard School of Public Health, *Journal of American College Health*

INFERENCES IN TABLES AND GRAPHS
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INFERENCES IN TABLES AND GRAPHS
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INFERENCES IN TABLES AND GRAPHS
Steps in Reading a Table or Graph

3 Read any captions at the top, the side, or underneath that tell exactly what each column, line, bar, number, or other item represents.

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INFERENCES IN TABLES AND GRAPHS

Which **inference** is more logically based on the table?

A. The older students get, the more they tend to binge.

B. In general, students who live in fraternities or sororities drink more heavily than students who live elsewhere.

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INFERENCES IN TABLES AND GRAPHS

Which **inference** is more logically based on the table?

A. The older students get, the more they tend to binge.

The "Age" section of the table indicates that once students become 24 or older, their bingeing decreases from 48% to 28%.

B. In general, students who live in fraternities or sororities drink more heavily than students who live elsewhere.

The "College residences" section of the table tells us that fraternity and sorority members do drink more heavily than the other three groups.

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INFERENCES IN TABLES AND GRAPHS

Which **inference** is more logically based on the table?

C. Bingeing is not popular among college athletes.

D. Most college students who binge are unaware of the true extent of their drinking.

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SOURCES: Harvard School of Public Health, *Journal of American College Health*

INFERENCES IN TABLES AND GRAPHS

Which **inference** is more logically based on the table?

C. Bingeing is not popular among college athletes.
The "Participation in sports" section shows that 54% of college athletes and 58% of team leaders binge.

D. Most college students who binge are unaware of the true extent of their drinking.
The "Attitude" section shows that most male and female bingers believe they drink only lightly or moderately.

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CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned the following:

- Many important ideas in reading are not stated directly but must be inferred. To make inferences about implied ideas, use the information provided as well as your own experience and logic.
- Inferences are also a key part of reading literature and such visual material as cartoons, tables, and graphs.

The next chapter—Chapter 8—will help make you aware of an author's purpose and tone.

Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills

Fifth Edition

John Langan

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Chapter Eight: Purpose and Tone

There is an author—a person with thoughts, feelings, and opinions—behind everything you read.

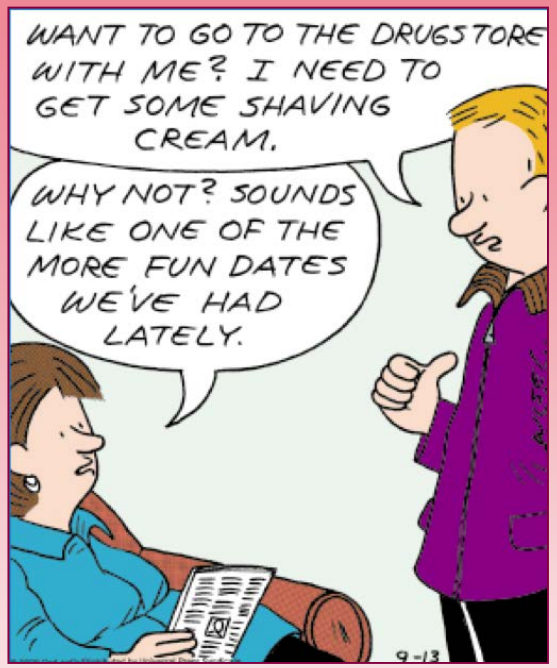
Authors write from a personal point of view.

That point of view is reflected in

- the **purpose** of a piece of writing—to inform, to persuade, or to entertain—and

- its **tone** — the expression of attitude and feeling.

PURPOSE AND TONE


WANT TO GO TO THE DRUGSTORE WITH ME? I NEED TO GET SOME SHAVING CREAM.
WHY NOT? SOUNDS LIKE ONE OF THE MORE FUN DATES WE'VE HAD LATELY.
9-13

The **purpose** of this cartoon, like all cartoons, is to entertain.

Can you tell what the **tone** of each speaker is? Which one actually means what he or she is saying? Which one does not?

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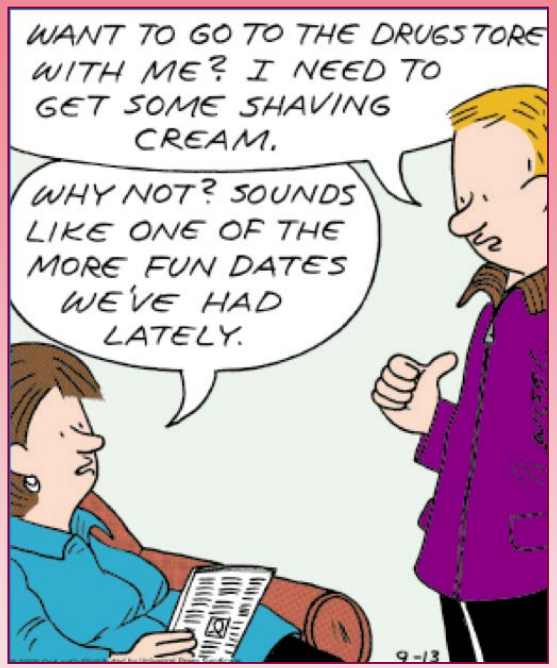
PURPOSE AND TONE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The man means what he is saying. He is asking the woman to go on an errand with him, so we can assume he enjoys and desires her company.

The woman does not mean what she is saying. Few people would consider a trip to drugstore a “fun date,” so we can infer she is being sarcastic, saying the opposite of what she means.

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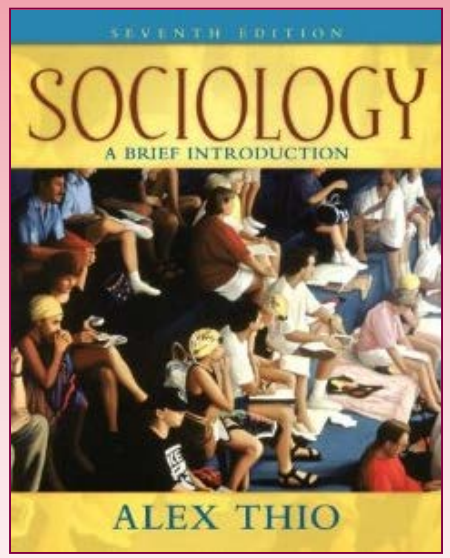
PURPOSE

Three common **purposes** (reasons for writing) are:

- To **inform** — to give information about a subject.
- To **persuade** — to convince the reader to agree with the author's point of view on a subject.
- To **entertain** — to amuse and delight; to appeal to the reader's senses and imagination.

PURPOSE

The cover and title of anything you read often suggest the author's primary purpose. What do you think is the main purpose of each of these books?



Primary purpose:

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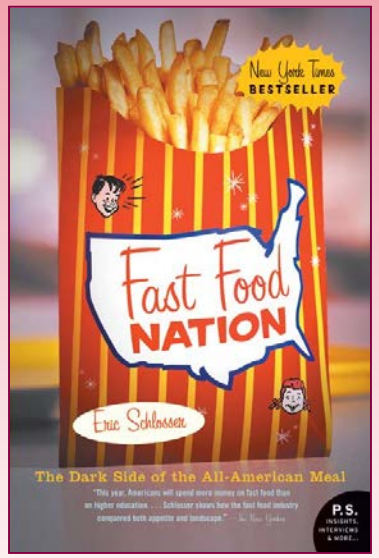

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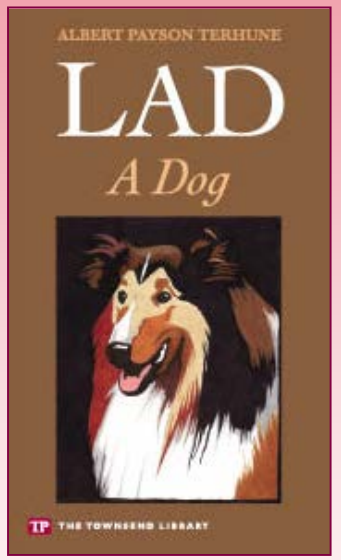

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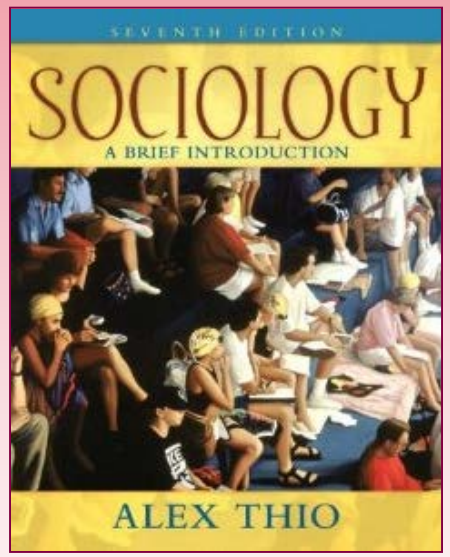

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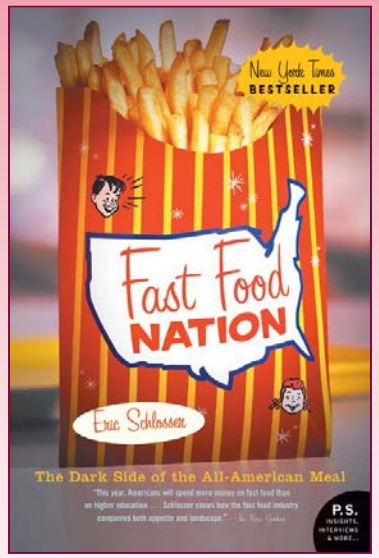

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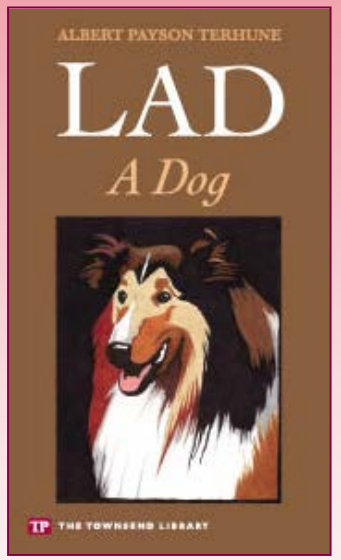

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PURPOSE

Read the paragraph below and decide what the author's **purpose** is.

Athletes should not earn millions of dollars a year. If they weren't paid so much, then tickets to sports events wouldn't have to be so expensive, and more people could enjoy sports more often. Also, more reasonable pay would make for better role models for young people, many of whom look up to sports figures.

Primary purpose:

A. to inform
B. to persuade
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PURPOSE

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Primary purpose:

A. to inform
B. to persuade
C. to entertain

The author wants to **persuade** us that "athletes should not earn millions of dollars every year." The word *should* is a clue. Words like *should, ought,* and *must* are often used to persuade.

PURPOSE

Read the paragraph below and decide what the author's **purpose** is.

The Bubonic plague, also called the Black Death, swept Europe, Asia, and Africa from 1346 to 1353. So deadly was this disease that it killed one-third of the population of these continents. The plague was spread by fleas infected with bacteria from diseased rats. When it resulted in pneumonia, coughing spread the bacteria directly through the air.

Primary purpose:

A. to inform
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PURPOSE

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Primary purpose:

A. to inform

B. to persuade

C. to entertain

The author is providing us with **factual** details about the Black Death.

PURPOSE

Read the paragraph below and decide what the author's **purpose** is.

Men don't even notice 97 percent of the beauty efforts women make. For example, the average woman spends five thousand hours per year worrying about her fingernails. But I have never once, in more than forty years of listening to men talk about women, heard a man say, "She has a nice set of fingernails!" Many men would not notice if a woman had upward of four hands.

Primary purpose:

A. to inform
B. to persuade
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Primary purpose:

A. to inform
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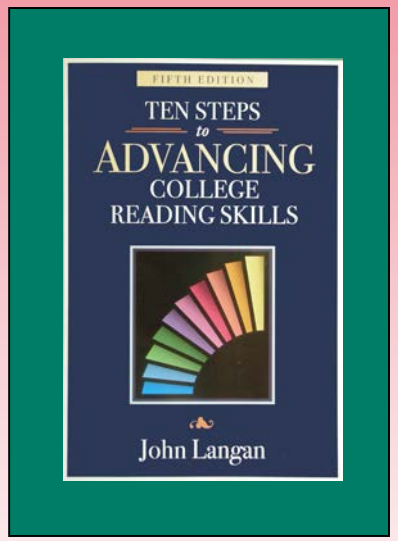
In order to **entertain** us, the author uses playful and exaggerated details about women's efforts to look beautiful.

WRITING WITH MORE THAN ONE PURPOSE

At times writing may blend two or even three purposes.



The main purpose of your textbook for this course is to inform.

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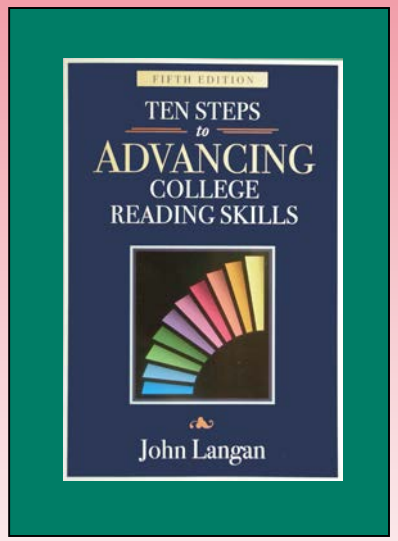

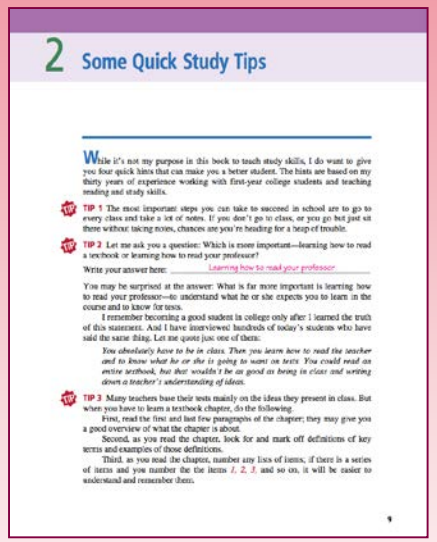

2 Some Quick Study Tips

While it's not my purpose in this book to teach study skills, I do want to give you four quick hints that can make you a better student. The hints are based on my thirty years of experience working with first-year college students and teaching reading and study skills.

TIP 1 The most important steps you can take to succeed in school are to go to every class and take a lot of notes. If you don't go to class, or you go but just sit there without taking notes, chances are you're heading for a heap of trouble.

TIP 2 Let me ask you a question: Which is more important—learning how to read a textbook or learning how to read your professor?

Write your answer here: Learning how to read your professor

You may be surprised at the answer: What is far more important is learning how to read your professor—to understand what he or she expects you to learn in the course and to know for tests.

I remember becoming a good student in college only after I learned the truth of this statement. And I have interviewed hundreds of today's students who have said the same thing. Let me quote just one of them:

You absolutely have to be in class. Then you learn how to read the teacher and to know what he or she is going to want on tests. You could read an entire textbook, but that wouldn't be as good as being in class and writing down a teacher's understanding of ideas.

TIP 3 Many teachers base their tests mainly on the ideas they present in class. But when you have to learn a textbook chapter, do the following.

First, read the first and last few paragraphs of the chapter; they may give you a good overview of what the chapter is about.

Second, as you read the chapter, look for and mark off definitions of key terms and examples of those definitions.

Third, as you read the chapter, number any lists of items; if there is a series of items and you number the the items *1*, *2*, *3*, and so on, it will be easier to understand and remember them.

The main purpose of your textbook for this course is to inform. But the purpose of "Some Quick Study Tips" on pages 9 and 10 is to inform and to persuade.

WRITING WITH MORE THAN ONE PURPOSE

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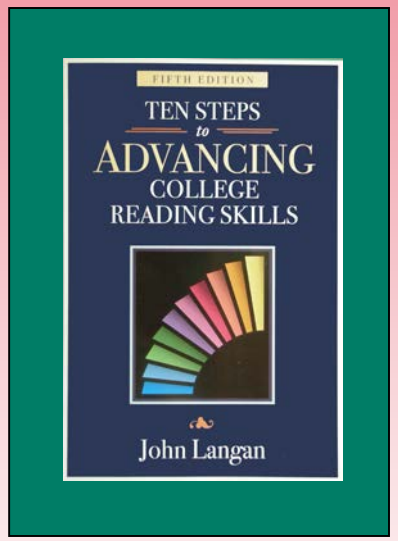

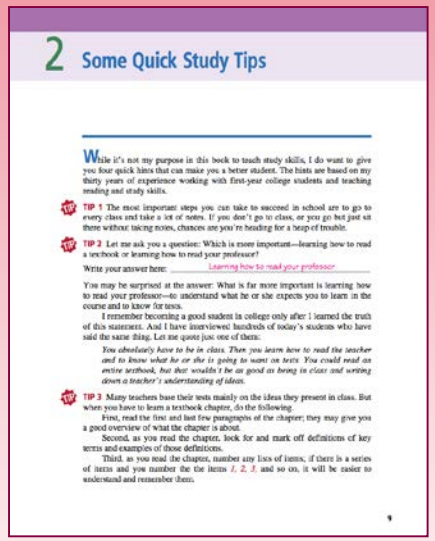

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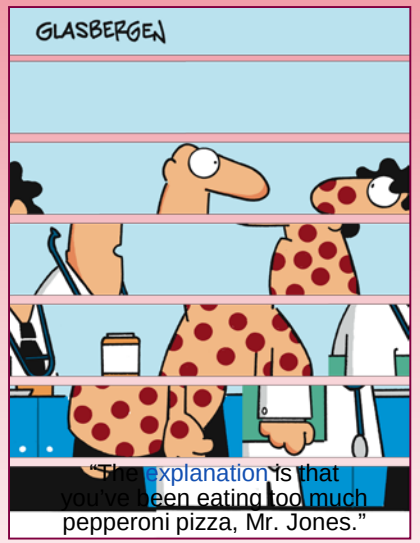
Second, as you read the chapter, look for and mark off definitions of key terms and examples of those definitions.

Third, as you read the chapter, number any lists of items; if there is a series of items and you number the the items *1, 2, 3,* and so on, it will be easier to understand and remember them.



"The explanation is that you've been eating too much pepperoni pizza, Mr. Jones."

The main purpose of your textbook for this course is to inform. But the purpose of "Some Quick Study Tips" on pages 9 and 10 is to inform and to persuade. And the purpose of the cartoons in the book is to inform and to entertain.

TONE

- A writer's **tone** reveals the attitude he or she has toward a subject.

- Tone is expressed through the words and details the writer selects.

TONE

Below are three statements by employees of a fast-food restaurant. Notice the differences in tone.

"I have no doubt that flipping burgers and toasting buns will prepare me for a top position on Wall Street."

Tone: mocking, sarcastic

"I love working at Burger Barn. I meet interesting people, earn extra money, and get to eat all the chicken nuggets I want when I go on break."

Tone: enthusiastic, positive

"I'm not excited about wearing fluorescent green polyester uniforms, but the managers are willing to schedule me around my classes, and the company offers scholarships to hard-working employees."

Tone: fair-minded, objective

TONE

Here is another statement by an employee of a fast-food restaurant. How would you describe the **tone**?

"I hate this job. The customers are rude, the managers are idiots, and the food smells like dog chow."

TONE

Here is another statement by an employee of a fast-food restaurant. How would you describe the **tone**?

"I hate this job. The customers are rude, the managers are idiots, and the food smells like dog chow."

Tone: bitter, angry

TONE

Pages 336 and 337 in your textbook list more than fifty words that describe tone.

TONE

What is the **tone** of each of the following statements?

Unfortunately, this car is a lot less reliable than I'd like.

The tone is: **A.** optimistic **B.** disappointed **C.** caring

It's not the greatest car in the world, but it usually takes me where I have to go.

The tone is: **A.** angry **B.** humorous **C.** tolerant

TONE

What is the **tone** of each of the following statements?

Unfortunately, this car is a lot less reliable than I'd like.

The tone is: **A.** optimistic **B.** disappointed **C.** caring

The words *unfortunately* and *less reliable than I'd like* indicate the disappointed tone.

It's not the greatest car in the world, but it usually takes me where I have to go.

The tone is: **A.** angry **B.** humorous **C.** tolerant

The phrase *usually takes me where I have to go* shows the writer's accepting attitude and signals a tolerant tone.

TONE
A Note on Irony

- One commonly used tone is **irony**.
- When writing has an **ironic** tone, it says one thing but means the opposite.

TONE
A Note on Irony

Below are three examples of verbal irony (also known as **sarcasm**).

Notice the quotation in each says the opposite of what is meant.

- If the price tag on a shirt you like is double what you'd expect, you might mutter, "What a bargain."
- After sitting through the first session of what is clearly going to be a very boring class, you say to a classmate, "I only hope you can stand all the excitement."
- After seeing your favorite basketball team play its worst game ever, you might comment, "I knew they wouldn't disappoint me."

TONE
A Note on Irony

Irony also refers to situations in which what happens is the opposite of what we might expect.

In the cartoon below, it is ironic that the father who expects his son to clean his room permits himself to have a very messy environment.

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TONE
A Note on Irony

Here are two more examples of situations in which what happens is the opposite of what we might expect.

- A doctor tells a man that he'd better exercise if he wants to stay healthy. So the man begins jogging. One day while jogging across the street, he is hit by a truck and dies instantly.

- A woman loved dancing, but her boyfriend did not dance well. So she insisted he take dancing lessons. After he started taking lessons, he fell in love with his dancing teacher.

TONE

A Note on Irony

Look at the cartoon below. Then decide whether the quotation is **straightforward** or **ironic** (in which what is said is sarcastically the opposite of what is really meant).

IF WE KNOW OUR SENIOR EXECUTIVE IS MAKING A BAD DECISION, SHOULDN'T WE TELL HER?
HMM, YES. LET'S END OUR CAREERS BY CHALLENGING A DECISION THAT WON'T CHANGE. THAT'S A GREAT IDEA.
I'M GETTING MIXED SIGNALS HERE.
AND LET'S PULL OUR NECKTIES UNTIL IT HURTS!

1. "If we know our senior executive is making a bad decision, shouldn't we tell her?"

A. straightforward **B.** ironic

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TONE

A Note on Irony

Look at the cartoon below. Then decide whether the quotation is **straightforward** or **ironic** (in which what is said is sarcastically the opposite of what is really meant).

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AND LET'S PULL OUR NECKTIES UNTIL IT HURTS!

1. "If we know our senior executive is making a bad decision, shouldn't we tell her?"

A. straightforward **B.** ironic

The speaker is asking a straightforward question. He is serious.

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TONE

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Look at the cartoon below. Then decide whether the quotation is **straightforward** or **ironic** (in which what is said is sarcastically the opposite of what is really meant).

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2. "Let's end our careers by challenging a decision that won't change. That's a great idea."

A. straightforward **B.** ironic

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TONE

A Note on Irony

Look at the cartoon below. Then decide whether the quotation is **straightforward** or **ironic** (in which what is said is sarcastically the opposite of what is really meant).

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2. "Let's end our careers by challenging a decision that won't change. That's a great idea."

A. straightforward **B.** ironic

The speaker is saying the opposite of what he means. For example, when he says, "That's a great idea," he really means, "That's a terrible idea."

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TONE

A Note on Irony

Look at the cartoon below. Then decide whether the quotation is **straightforward** or **ironic** (in which what is said is sarcastically the opposite of what is really meant).

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I'M GETTING MIXED SIGNALS HERE.
AND LET'S PULL OUR NECKTIES UNTIL IT HURTS!

3. "And let's pull our neckties until it hurts."

A. straightforward **B.** ironic

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TONE

A Note on Irony

Look at the cartoon below. Then decide whether the quotation is **straightforward** or **ironic** (in which what is said is sarcastically the opposite of what is really meant).

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I'M GETTING MIXED SIGNALS HERE.
AND LET'S PULL OUR NECKTIES UNTIL IT HURTS!

3. "And let's pull our neckties until it hurts."

A. straightforward **B.** ironic

This statement continues the irony by suggesting that causing themselves pain is as good an idea as challenging the boss's decision.

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CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned that part of effective reading is to do the following:

- Be aware or an author's **purpose**: the reason he or she writes. Three common purposes are to inform, to persuade, and to entertain.

- Be aware of **tone**: the expression of the author's attitude and feeling about the subject. A writer's tone might be objective—the case in most textbook writing—or it might be lighthearted, sympathetic, angry, affectionate, respectful, or any of many other tones.

- One important tone to recognize is **irony**: saying one thing but meaning the opposite.

The next chapter—Chapter 9—will explain another part of effective reading: recognizing an author's point in an argument and evaluating the support for that point.

Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills

Fifth Edition

John Langan

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Chapter Nine: Argument

WHICH CAR ARE WE TAKING?
MINE'S OUT OF GAS.
MINE'S OUT OF GAS AND IT'S A MESS.
MINES OUT OF GAS, AND IT'S A MESS, AND I CAN'T FIND THE KEYS.
YOU WIN.
WISEJACOBICH

In an **argument** (such as the one going on in the cartoon), the two parties each present their supporting evidence.

The goal is to determine who has more solid evidence to support his or her point of view.

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ARGUMENT

A good argument is made up of

- a **point**, or **conclusion**, and
- **logical evidence** to back it up.

ARGUMENT

Often the most important things we must do as critical readers are

1. Recognize the **point** the author is making.
2. Decide if the author's support is **relevant**.
3. Decide if an author's support is **adequate**.

THE BASICS OF ARGUMENT: POINT AND SUPPORT

A good argument is one in which you make a **point** and then provide persuasive and logical evidence to **support** it.

Here is an example of a point followed by three supporting reasons:

Point: Even though the apartment is nice, I didn't think you should move there.

Supporting reasons:

1. The closest washer and dryer are in a laundromat three miles away.
2. Next door to the apartment building is an all-night bar.
3. Several bugs scurried into dark holes when the kitchen sink cabinet door was opened.

THE BASICS OF ARGUMENT: POINT AND SUPPORT

Of the four items below, one statement is the **point**, and the other three are statements **supporting** that point. Which is the point. and which are the supporting statements?

A. The “fresh” fruits and vegetables are often spotted and wrinkled.

B. Milk is routinely kept on the shelves several days after the suggested.

C. The corner convenience store is run poorly.

D. At busy times of the day, there’s not enough help in the store, so the lines are very long.

THE BASICS OF ARGUMENT: POINT AND SUPPORT

Of the four items below, one statement is the **point**, and the other three are statements **supporting** that point. Which is the point, and which are the supporting statements?

Support ⇨ **A.** The "fresh" fruits and vegetables are often spotted and wrinkled.

Support ⇨ **B.** Milk is routinely kept on the shelves several days after the suggested.

Point ⇨ **C.** The corner convenience store is run poorly.

Support ⇨ **D.** At busy times of the day, there's not enough help in the store, so the lines are very long.

Statements A, B, and D give logical reasons that support the statement "The corner convenience store is run poorly."

ARGUMENT: RELEVANT SUPPORT

Once you identify the point and support of an argument, you need to decide if each piece of evidence is **relevant**—in other words, if it really applies to the point.

ARGUMENT: RELEVANT SUPPORT

"Potato chips aren't rubbery and blubbery like fat. They're crispy like lettuce. That proves they're diet food!"

The man in this cartoon does **not** offer relevant support for his point that potato chips are diet food.

ARGUMENT: RELEVANT SUPPORT

Which two of the statements of support are **relevant** to the point?

Point: Pigs make good pets.

A. When a pig weighs over 180 pounds, it is called a hog.

B. Pigs are friendly and intelligent.

C. In 1965, a pig named “Old Faithful” gave birth to thirty-six piglets in one litter.

D. Pigs are easily housebroken.

E. Pigs, like people, can get sunburn.

ARGUMENT: RELEVANT SUPPORT

Which two of the statements of support are **relevant** to the point?

Point: Pigs make good pets.

A. When a pig weighs over 180 pounds, it is called a hog. ⇦Not relevant

B. Pigs are friendly and intelligent. ⇦Relevant

C. In 1965, a pig named "Old Faithful" gave birth to thirty-six piglets in one litter. ⇦Not relevant

D. Pigs are easily housebroken. ⇦Relevant

E. Pigs, like people, can get sunburn. ⇦Not relevant

Explanation

A. What an animal is called has no bearing on how good a pet it will make.

B. People tend to like pets who like them back and with whom they can interact.

C. How many pet owners want thirty-six more pets than they started out with?

D. Given modern standards of cleanliness, being easily housebroken is an attractive quality in a pet.

E. Most people would prefer a pet for whom they wouldn't have to buy a lifetime supply of sunscreen.

ARGUMENT: RELEVANT SUPPORT

Read the paragraph and see if you can find the statement that does **not** support the point of the argument.

(1)When you go to college, you should live off campus. (2)In a rented apartment you can enjoy the privacy and convenience of your own kitchen and bathroom. (3)If you live off campus, getting to and from classes will take more time. (4)However, off-campus apartments give you more living space than a dormitory room for the same price or less. (5)An off-campus apartment is usually quieter than a dorm. (6)It also gives you a better chance to develop a sense of the larger community, the town or city in which your college is located.

ARGUMENT: RELEVANT SUPPORT

Read the paragraph and see if you can find the statement that does **not** support the point of the argument.

(1)When you go to college, you should live off campus. (2)In a rented apartment you can enjoy the privacy and convenience of your own kitchen and bathroom. (3)If you live off campus, getting to and from classes will take more time. (4)However, off-campus apartments give you more living space than a dormitory room for the same price or less. (5)An off-campus apartment is usually quieter than a dorm. (6)It also gives you a better chance to develop a sense of the larger community, the town or city in which your college is located.

The point of this argument is stated in the first sentence: "When you go to college, you should live off campus." Sentences 2, 4, 5, and 6 provide **advantages** of living off campus. Sentence 3, however, is irrelevant because it changes the subject to a **disadvantage** of living off campus.

ARGUMENT: ADEQUATE SUPPORT

A valid argument must include not only relevant support but also **adequate** support—support that is substantial enough to prove the point.

ARGUMENT: ADEQUATE SUPPORT

Read the three items of support (evidence). Then answer the question.

Support:

- Lately Valerie has looked thinner and paler than usual.
- She used to go to all the parties, but now she stays home in the evenings.
- At work, she has been seen crying in the ladies' room.

Which **point** is adequately supported by all the evidence above?

A. Valerie is seriously ill.

B. Something is troubling Valerie.

C. Valerie has broken up with her boyfriend.

D. Valerie owes a great deal of money.

ARGUMENT: ADEQUATE SUPPORT

Support:

- Lately Valerie has looked thinner and paler than usual.
- She used to go to all the parties, but now she stays home in the evenings.
- At work, she has been seen crying in the ladies' room.

A. Valerie is seriously ill.

The fact that Valerie hasn't been looking well makes us wonder if she is seriously ill, but we have no other evidence for this conclusion.

B. Something is troubling Valerie.

From her behavior, we can safely conclude that something is troubling Valerie, but we have very little evidence about what is troubling her.

C. Valerie has broken up with her boyfriend.

The fact that Valerie hasn't been going to parties does make us wonder whether or not she has broken up with her boyfriend, but we have absolutely no other evidence to support that conclusion.

D. Valerie owes a great deal of money.

Except for the evidence showing that Valerie is troubled in some way, there is no evidence to support the conclusion that she owes a great deal of money.

ARGUMENT IN TEXTBOOK WRITING

- **Textbook arguments** generally have solid support.
- Recognizing the author's **point** and watching for **relevant** and **adequate support** will help you become a more involved and critical reader.

CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned the following:

- A good argument is made up of a point, or a conclusion, and logical evidence to back it up.
- To critically read an argument, you must recognize the **point** the author is making.
- To think through an argument, you need to decide if each piece of evidence is **relevant**.
- To think through an argument, you also need to decide if the author's support is **adequate**.
- Textbook arguments generally have solid support, but recognizing the author's point and watching for relevant and adequate support will help you become a more involved and critical reader.

The final chapter in Part One—Chapter 10—will explain other aspects of being a critical reader: separating fact from opinion, detecting propaganda, and recognizing errors in reasoning.

Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills

Fifth Edition

John Langan

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Chapter Ten:
Critical Reading

Skilled readers are those who can *recognize* an author's point and the support for that point.

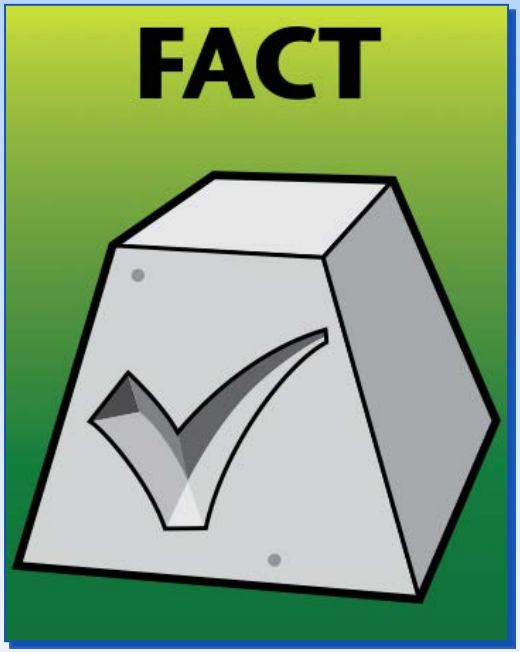
Critical readers are those who can *evaluate* an author's support for a point and determine whether that support is solid or not.

CRITICAL READING

Reading critically includes these skills:

- Separating **facts** from **opinion**
- Detecting **propaganda**
- Recognizing **errors in reasoning**

SEPARATING FACT FROM OPINION



Facts are solidly grounded and can be checked for accuracy.

Opinions are afloat and open to question.

SEPARATING FACT FROM OPINION

Here is a personals ad that appeared in a retirement community newspaper in Florida:

> **FOXY LADY.** Blue-haired beauty, 80s, slim 5′4″ (used to be 5′6″). Widow who has just buried fourth husband. Has original teeth and new parts including hip, knee, cornea, and valves. A groovy chick who is still the life of the party.

- Which of the statements in the ad are **facts**?
- Which of the statements in the ad are **opinions**?

SEPARATING FACT FROM OPINION

FOXY LADY. Blue-haired beauty, 80s, slim 5′4″ (used to be 5′6″). Widow who has just buried fourth husband. Has original teeth and new parts including hip, knee, cornea, and valves. A groovy chick who is still the life of the party.

- **Facts in the ad:** the woman's hair color, age, and height; her marital status; her physical condition
- **Opinions in the ad:** She is a "foxy lady," a "beauty," and "slim"; she is "a groovy chick who is still the life of the party."

FACT

A **fact** is information that can be proved through objective evidence.

This evidence may be physical proof or the spoken or written testimony of witnesses.

FACT

Three Examples of Facts

Fact: My grandfather has eleven toes.
(Someone can count them.)

Fact: In 1841, William Henry Harrison served as president of the United States for only thirty-one days; he died of pneumonia.
(We can check history records to confirm that this is true.)

Fact: Tarantulas are hairy spiders capable of inflicting on humans a painful but not deadly bite.
(We can check biology reports to confirm that this statement is true.)

OPINION

An **opinion** is a belief, judgment, or conclusion that cannot be objectively proved true.

As a result, it is open to question.

OPINION

Three Examples of Opinions

Opinion: My grandfather's feet are ugly.
(Two people can look at the same thing and come to different conclusions about its beauty. For instance, the speaker's grandmother may have found those feet attractive. *Ugly* is a **value word**, a word we use to express a value judgment. It signals an opinion.)

Opinion: Harrison should never have been elected president in the first place.
(Those who voted for him would not have agreed.)

Opinion: Tarantulas are disgusting.
(Who says? Not the people who keep them as pets.)

FACT AND OPINION

Five Points about Fact and Opinion

1 Statements of **fact** may be found to be **untrue**.

Example

It was once considered to be a fact that the world was flat, but that “fact” turned out to be an error.

FACT AND OPINION
Five Points about Fact and Opinion

2 Value (or **judgment**) **words** often represent **opinions**.

Examples of value words

best	great	beautiful
worst	terrible	bad
better	lovely	good
worse	disgusting	wonderful

The observation that it is raining is an objective fact. The statement that the weather is bad is a subjective opinion. Some people (such as farmers whose crops need water) would consider rain to be good weather.

FACT AND OPINION
Five Points about Fact and Opinion

3 The words ***should*** and ***ought to*** often signal **opinions**.

Example

Couples with young children should not be allowed to divorce.

This statement represents what the speaker thinks should not be allowed. Others might disagree.

FACT AND OPINION
Five Points about Fact and Opinion

4 Much information that **sounds factual** is **really opinion**.

Example

The truth of the matter is that olive oil tastes much better than butter.

This statement is an opinion, in spite of the words *the truth of the matter*. Some people prefer the taste of butter.

FACT AND OPINION
Five Points about Fact and Opinion

5 Much of what we read and hear is **a mixture of fact and opinion**.

Example

Each year, over 1,600 American teenagers kill themselves, and many of these deaths could be easily prevented.

The first part of the sentence is a fact that can be confirmed by checking statistics on teen suicides.

The second part is an opinion. The word *easily* is a **judgment word** — people may differ on how easy or difficult they consider something to be.

FACT AND OPINION in Reading

Both facts and opinions can be valuable to readers.

However, it is important to recognize the difference between the two.

FACT AND OPINION in Reading

Which statement below is fact? Which is opinion?

A. No flower is more beautiful than a simple daisy.

B. In Egypt, 96 percent of the land is desert.

FACT AND OPINION in Reading

A. No flower is more beautiful than a simple daisy.

B. In Egypt, 96 percent of the land is desert.

Explanation

Item A is an opinion. Many people consider other flowers more beautiful than the daisy. The word *beautiful* is a **value word**.

Item B is a fact, agreed upon and written down by experts who study geography.

FACT AND OPINION in Reading

Which statement below is fact? Which is opinion? Which is fact **and** opinion?

A. It is riskier for a woman to have a first child after age 40 than before.

B. It is stupid for women over 40 to get pregnant.

C. It is sometimes risky and always foolish for a woman to have a first child after age 40.

FACT AND OPINION in Reading

A. It is riskier for a woman to have a first child after age 40 than before.

B. It is stupid for women over 40 to get pregnant.

C. It is sometimes risky and always foolish for a woman to have a first child after age 40.

Item A is a fact. It can be verified by checking medical statistics.

Item B is an opinion. Some people might admire the woman who has children in her 40s.

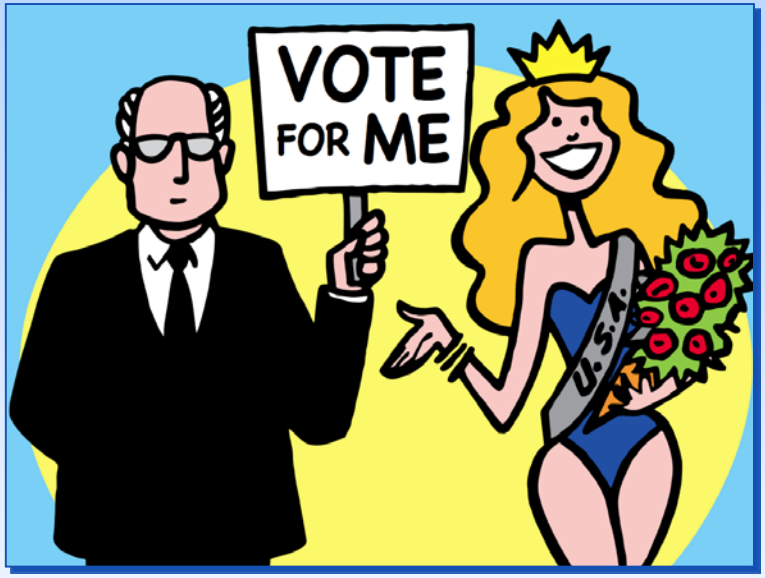
Item C is fact **and** opinion. Although it may be risky, not everyone would say it is foolish.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA

Propaganda uses emotional appeals instead of presenting solid evidence to support a point.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA

Advertisers, salespeople, and politicians often lack adequate factual support for their points, so they appeal to our emotions by using **propaganda** techniques.



Part of being a critical reader is the ability to recognize these propaganda techniques.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA

Six common propaganda techniques:

- Bandwagon
- Testimonial
- Transfer
- Plain Folks
- Name Calling
- Glittering Generalities

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
1 Bandwagon

The **bandwagon** technique tells us to buy a product or support a certain issue because, in effect, “everybody else is doing it.”

Examples

A brand of soap used to advertise: “Aren’t you glad you use our soap? Don’t you wish everybody did?”

A computer company advertises: “More than half of the companies in North American rely on our computers. Who do you rely on?”

The ads imply that if you don’t jump on the bandwagon and use these products, you’ll be left behind.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
1 Bandwagon

Which ad uses the bandwagon appeal?

A. A magazine ad for Goodbuy Shoes shows a picture of the glamorous movie star Lana Starr. The caption reads: “Why should I spend more when I can get great shoes at Goodbuy?”

B. An ad for a car dealer shows cattle stampeding across the plains, while the announcer exclaims, “Everybody is rushing to Town Auto Mall!”

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
1 Bandwagon

Which ad uses the bandwagon appeal?

A. A magazine ad for Goodbuy Shoes shows a picture of the glamorous movie star Lana Starr. The caption reads: “Why should I spend more when I can get great shoes at Goodbuy?”

B. An ad for a car dealer shows cattle stampeding across the plains, while the announcer exclaims, “Everybody is rushing to Town Auto Mall!”

The car dealer want us to “join the stampede” to Town Auto Mall. (Item A is testimonial.)

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
2 Testimonial

The idea behind the **testimonial** approach is that the testimony of famous people influences the viewers that admire these people.

Examples

"This yogurt can help regulate your digestive system in just two weeks," says a famous actress. "And it tastes great."

A former United States senator and one-time candidate for president promotes a product intended to help a man's sexual performance.

The fame of the star and the senator is intended to influence us to buy the products they are promoting.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
2 Testimonial

Which ad uses a testimonial?

A. Become one of the millions of satisfied customers who control their weight with our diet shakes.

B. A picture of golf pro Tiger Woods appears on boxes of a breakfast cereal.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
2 Testimonial

Which ad uses a testimonial?

A. Become one of the millions of satisfied customers who control their weight with our diet shakes.

B. A picture of golf pro Tiger Woods appears on boxes of a breakfast cereal.

We are supposed to believe that Tiger Woods likes and recommends the cereal, and possibly even that the cereal is responsible for Woods's successes on the golf course. (Choice A is bandwagon.)

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
3 Transfer

With the **transfer** technique, products or candidates try to associate themselves with something that people admire, desire, or love.

Examples

An ad for a hair color product for men shows a beautiful young woman in a short dress running her fingers through a man's hair.

A candidate for Congress is shown sitting at a desk. Standing on either side of him are his wife and family, and there is an American flag behind him.

In the first ad, we should transfer to the hair product our positive feelings about the beautiful young woman in the short dress. In the second ad, the candidate wants us to transfer our patriotism and love of family to him.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
3 Transfer

Which ad uses transfer?

A. A man dressed as Uncle Sam is shown eating a particular brand of hot dog.

B. A magazine ad shows a film star with a milk mustache. The caption reads: “Drink Milk.”

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
3 Transfer

Which ad uses transfer?

A. A man dressed as Uncle Sam is shown eating a particular brand of hot dog.

B. A magazine ad shows a film star with a milk mustache. The caption reads: “Drink Milk.”

The hot dog manufacturer wants Americans to transfer the love they feel for their country to a particular brand of hot dog. (Choice B is testimonial.)

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
4 Plain Folks

When using the **plain folks** technique, political candidates and presidents of large companies present themselves as ordinary, average citizens

Examples

The chairman of a poultry company is shown leaning on a rail fence in front of a farmhouse. He says, “I’m proud to uphold the values that go back to our company’s start on my great-grandfather’s farm in 1900.”

A presidential candidate is photographed barbecuing ribs and chicken for reporters at his rustic home in the country. Afterward, his wife posts their family recipes on the campaign website.

The chairman and the candidate both wish to demonstrate that they are regular, everyday people—just “plain folks” like the rest of us.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
4 Plain Folks

Which ad uses a plain-folks approach?

A. A beautiful woman in an elegant white dress and long white gloves is shown sipping a glass of a certain brand of chardonnay wine.

B. An average-looking middle-aged couple enjoys an outdoor meal cooked on their new barbecue grill.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
4 Plain Folks

Which ad uses a plain-folks approach?

A. A beautiful woman in an elegant white dress and long white gloves is shown sipping a glass of a certain brand of chardonnay wine.

B. An average-looking middle-aged couple enjoys an outdoor meal cooked on their new barbecue grill.

If the barbecue grill is favored by ordinary, average citizens just like us, then we'll like it, too. (Choice A is transfer.)

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
5 Name Calling

Name calling is the use of emotionally loaded language or negative comments to turn people against a rival product, candidate, or movement.

Examples

The opponents of a political candidate say he is a “spineless jellyfish.”

A cell phone service advertises: “Unlike some services, we won’t rip you off with hidden charges or drop your calls.”

Clearly the opponents are making negative comments about the candidate. In the second item, saying that other cell phone services will rip you off and drop your calls is making negative comments about them.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
5 Name Calling

Which ad uses name calling?

A. A famous singer tells a television interviewer that a particular candidate for president is “born to run.”

B. A newspaper editorial calls a candidate for town council “a hypocrite and a greedy, ambulance-chasing lawyer.”

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
5 Name Calling

Which ad uses name calling?

A. A famous singer tells a television interviewer that a particular candidate for president is “born to run.”

B. A newspaper editorial calls a candidate for town council “a hypocrite and a greedy, ambulance-chasing lawyer.”

By saying the candidate is a hypocrite and an ambulance chaser, the editorial is calling the candidate names. (Choice A is glittering generality.)

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
6 Glittering Generalities

A **glittering generality** is an important-sounding but unspecific claim about some product, candidate, or cause.

Examples

A financial advisor says: “True wealth is about more than money. It’s about achieving life.”

A magazine ad for a line of women’s clothing advertises: “Let yourself shine.”

The statements *It’s about achieving life* and *Let yourself shine* sound important but say nothing.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
6 Glittering Generalities

Which ad uses a glittering generality?

A. An ad for a body wash invites the reader to “Shower your skin in luxury.”

B. A candidate for the US congress is called “Mr. Millionaire Know-it-all” by his opponent.

DETECTING PROPAGANDA
6 Glittering Generalities

Which ad uses a glittering generality?

A. An ad for a body wash invites the reader to “Shower your skin in luxury.”

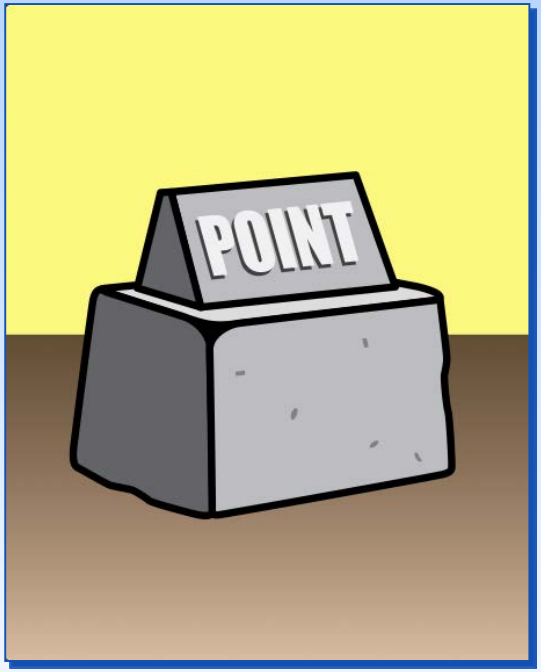
B. A candidate for the US congress is called “Mr. Millionaire Know-it-all” by his opponent.

Other than hinting that the product should be used in the shower, the statement tells us nothing specific about the body wash. (Choice B is name calling.)

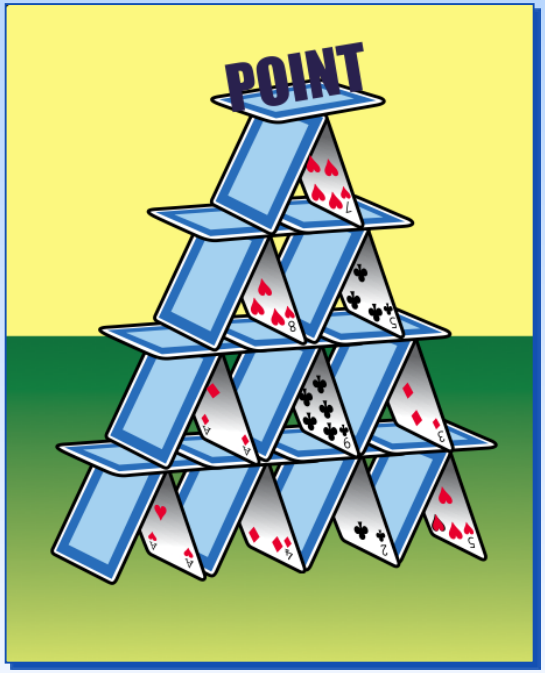
RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING

Fallacies are errors in reasoning that take the place of the real support needed in an argument.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING



A **valid** point is based on a rock-like foundation of solid support.



A **fallacious** point is based on a house of cards that offers no real support at all.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING

Two common fallacies were discussed in Chapter 9, “Argument”:

- **Changing the subject** distracts us from the issue by presenting irrelevant support that actually has nothing to do with the argument.
- **Hasty generalization** is a fallacy in which a point has inadequate support. Drawing a conclusion based on insufficient evidence is the same as making a hasty generalization.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Six Common Fallacies

Three Fallacies That Ignore the Issue

- **Circular Reasoning**
- **Personal Attack**
- **Straw Man**

Three Fallacies That Oversimplify the Issue

- **False Cause**
- **False Comparison**
- **Either-Or**

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING

Fallacies That Ignore the Issue: Circular Reasoning

Circular reasoning repeats the point instead of giving evidence for it. Circular reasoning is also known as **begging the question**.

Example

> Ms. Jenkins is a great manager because she is so wonderful at managing.

The supporting reason ("she is so wonderful at managing") is really the same as the conclusion ("Ms. Jenkins is a great manager").

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING

Fallacies That Ignore the Issue: Circular Reasoning

Which item contains an example of the circular reasoning fallacy?

A. Sports cars continue to be popular because so many people like them.

B. My wife wants to participate in the local amateur theater group, but I don't want all those actors flirting with her.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Fallacies That Ignore the Issue: Circular Reasoning

Which item contains an example of the circular reasoning fallacy?

A. Sports cars continue to be popular because so many people like them.

B. My wife wants to participate in the local amateur theater group, but I don't want all those actors flirting with her.

Saying that many people like sports cars is another way of saying that sports cars are popular. (Item B is straw man.)

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Fallacies That Ignore the Issue: Personal Attack

Personal attack ignores the issue and concentrates instead on the character of the opponent.

Example

> Our mayor's opinions about local crime are worthless. Last week, his own son was arrested for disturbing the peace.

The arrest of his son would probably have embarrassed the mayor, but it has nothing to do with the value of his opinions on local crime.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Fallacies That Ignore the Issue: Personal Attack

Which item contains an example of personal attack?

A. Mr. Casey was fined for drinking while driving and should not be allowed to teach math.

B. Barry cannot make up his mind easily because he is indecisive.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Fallacies That Ignore the Issue: Personal Attack

Which item contains an example of personal attack?

A. Mr. Casey was fined for drinking while driving and should not be allowed to teach math.

B. Barry cannot make up his mind easily because he is indecisive.

The statement attacks Casey for his poor judgment about driving, not for his ability to teach math. (Item B is circular reasoning.)

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Fallacies That Ignore the Issue: Straw Man

Straw man falsely claims that an opponent holds and extreme position and then opposes that position.

Example

> The candidate for mayor says she'll cut taxes, but do you really want fewer police officers protecting your city?

The candidate does not support having "fewer police officers." Her plan calls for reducing taxes by privatizing the the city's trash collection, not reducing the police force.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Fallacies That Ignore the Issue: Straw Man

Which item contains an example of straw man?

A. The school board is considering building a swimming pool, but I don't like the idea of kids hanging out there all day and neglecting their studies.

B. Pearl is a poor choice for the position of salesperson—she's a lesbian.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Fallacies That Ignore the Issue: Straw Man

Which item contains an example of straw man?

A. The school board is considering building a swimming pool, but I don't like the idea of kids hanging out there all day and neglecting their studies.

B. Pearl is a poor choice for the position of salesperson—she's a lesbian.

The school board is not advocating that kids hang out all day and neglect their studies. (Item B is personal attack.)

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING

Fallacies That Oversimplify the Issue: False Cause

False cause assumes that because event A came *before* event B, event A *caused* event B.

Example

> The baseball team was doing well before Paul Hamilton became manager. Clearly, he is the cause of the decline.

Event A: Paul Hamilton became manager.
Event B: The baseball team is losing games.
But Paul Hamilton has been the manager for only a year. There may be other causes responsible for the team's losses, such as the fact that several key players are past their prime.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Fallacies That Oversimplify the Issue: False Cause

Which item contains an example of false cause?

A. The waiter went off duty early, and then the vase was discovered missing, so he must have stolen it.

B. In Vermont we leave our doors unlocked all year round, so I don't think it's necessary for you New Yorkers to have three locks on your front doors.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Fallacies That Oversimplify the Issue: False Cause

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A. The waiter went off duty early, and then the vase was discovered missing, so he must have stolen it.

B. In Vermont we leave our doors unlocked all year round, so I don't think it's necessary for you New Yorkers to have three locks on your front doors.

The waiter going off work early does not indicate that he stole the vase. He may have gone home sick. (Item B is false comparison.)

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING

Fallacies That Oversimplify the Issue: False Comparison

False comparison assumes that two things being compared are more alike than they really are.

Example

When your grandmother was your age, she was already married and had four children. So why aren't you married?

The situations are different in two respects: (1) society, when the grandmother was young, encouraged early marriage; (2) the grandmother was not working outside the home or attending college. The differences are more important than the similarities, so this is a false comparison.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING

Fallacies That Oversimplify the Issue: False Comparison

Which item contains an example of false comparison?

A. A week after a new building supervisor took over, the elevator stopped working. What a lousy super he is!

B. All of my friends like my tattoo and pierced tongue, so I'm sure my new boss will too.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING

Fallacies That Oversimplify the Issue: False Comparison

Which item contains an example of false comparison?

A. A week after a new building supervisor took over, the elevator stopped working. What a lousy super he is!

B. All of my friends like my tattoo and pierced tongue, so I'm sure my new boss will too.

There are probably many differences between the speaker's friends and the speaker's boss—including differences in taste. (Item A is false cause.)

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING

Fallacies That Oversimplify the Issue: Either-Or

Either-or assumes that there are only two sides to a question.

Example

> People who support gun control want to take away our rights.

This argument ignores the fact that a person can support gun control *and* believe that hunters and others have the right to own guns.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Fallacies That Oversimplify the Issue: Either-Or

Which item contains an example of the either-or fallacy?

A. Why can't we have a big dog in this apartment? You had a Great Dane when you were growing up on the farm.

B. Eat your string beans, or you won't grow up strong and healthy.

RECOGNIZING ERRORS IN REASONING
Fallacies That Oversimplify the Issue: Either-Or

Which item contains an example of the either-or fallacy?

A. Why can't we have a big dog in this apartment? You had a Great Dane when you were growing up on the farm.

B. Eat your string beans, or you won't grow up strong and healthy.

There are other ways to grow up healthy and strong besides eating one's string beans. (Item A is false comparison.)

CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter, you learned that critical readers evaluate an author's support for a point and determine whether that support is solid or not. Critical reading includes the following three abilities:

- **Separating fact from opinion.** A **fact** is information that can be proved true through objective evidence. An **opinion** is a belief, judgment, or conclusion that cannot be proved objectively true. Much of what we read is a mixture of fact and opinion, and our job as readers is to arrive at the best possible informed opinion. Textbooks and other effective writing provide informed opinion—opinion based upon factual information.
- **Detecting propaganda.** Advertisers, salespeople, and politicians often try to promote their points by appealing to our emotions rather than our powers of reason. To do so, they practice six common propaganda techniques: bandwagon, testimonial, transfer, plain folks, name calling, and glittering generalities.
- **Recognizing errors in reasoning.** Politicians and others are at times guilty of errors in reasoning—**fallacies**—that take the place of the real support needed in an argument. Such fallacies include circular reasoning, personal attack, straw man, false cause, false comparison, and either-or.